

The Rice Paper

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The Rice-Paper is the electronic newsletter of the CGRF. Published periodically, it collects the most recent findings in the botany, cultivation, material culture, culinary preparation, and history of Carolina Gold Rice and associated heritage grains. Contributions and editorial correspondence should be directed to Dr. David S. Shields at the University of South Carolina: dshields@gwm.sc.edu. The information published here appears as a public service. CGRF encourages republication of The Rice-Paper's contents provided there is no alteration of the substance of the material being reproduced, that the reproducer does not profit from the republication, and that a clear and full credit is given to author and source of the material.

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Shields Elected Chairman of CGRF Board

Dr. David S. Shields, McClintock Professor of Southern Letters in the English and History Departments of the University of South Carolina, was elected Chairman of the Board of the South Carolina Gold Rice Foundation at the February Meeting of the SCGRF.

An internationally known scholar of early American literature and culture, Shields has made a specialty of studying traditional southern foodways and the history of agriculture. His interest in Carolina rice culture was stimulated in 1985 by the discovery in Aberdeen Scotland of the most elaborate literary description of the creation of a rice plantation to have survived from the colonial period: George Ogilvie's *Carolina; or, The Planter*, 1776. The journal *Southern Literature* devoted a special issue to its republication in 1986.

While best known as an author, having published several standard works of early American cultural history, including *Oracles of Empire* (1990) and *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (1997), Shields began studying agricultural history and food in 2000. He hosted the landmark Charleston Conference, "Cuisines of the Lowcountry and the Caribbean in 2003" and spoke at the 2006 Charleston symposium on Carolina Gold Rice. He is editing the proceedings volume of that meeting for the SCGRF. His edition of the writings of early America's greatest wine maker, Nicholas Herbemont, will be released by the University of Georgia Press in February 2009. His archive of antebellum southern recipes will be put on line by the Southern Foodways Alliance later this year.

Carolina Gold Rice Inducted into the Slow Food Ark of Taste

Interview by Glenn Roberts, President & CEO, Carolina Gold Rice Foundation, April 6, 2008

Slow Food, an organization founded in Italy in 1986 and devoted to food diversity, is both benefactor and recipient in the recent explosive growth of worldwide interest in sustainability, small niche farming and local food. Slow Food's sweeping popularity emanates from Carlo Petrini, Slow Food founder, in this simple philosophical declaration: "Support good, clean and fair food." Petrini's tenacious advocacy of Slow Food's philosophy resulted in an astonishing grassroots gathering of five thousand small farmers from around the world in Turin, Italy, at Terra Madre, an event organized by Slow Food to promote local food in 2004. One of those farmers was Emile DeFelice, owner of Caw Caw Creek Pastured Pork in Columbia, South Carolina. "I arrived at the Turin airport and the diversity of farmers was amazing, almost Disneyesque...like a convention of hats from around the world...I'd never witnessed anything like it," Mr. DeFelice exclaims. "You know how some people speak of epiphany in their lives? I had a series of daily epiphanies like peeling

back the layers of an onion...every farmer I met at Terra Madre seemed to vault my thinking toward new ideas...I was completely overwhelmed." "My experience at Terra Madre compelled me to reflect in earnest upon the way I farm and to consider why my life in farming until then had seemed so difficult," says Mr. DeFelice. "I realized my challenges were very small compared to many of the farmers I met like the Yak herder who lived in the open for months every year to graze and protect his flock...who farms like that anymore? I realized I needed to commit to sustainable farming on a whole new level and I decided then and there to go for it," declares Mr. DeFelice. "The decision I made at Terra Madre led me to successful, sustainable and humane pasture pork farming and wide ranging advocacy for the farming and food issues I believe in, and, you know what, life and farming is much easier, more exciting and definitely more rewarding now," says Mr. DeFelice.

Fast forward four years and it is obvious that Emile DeFelice has nurtured a vigorous national platform for his farming and food advocacy efforts: five years as board member and advocacy coordinator for Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, candidate for Commissioner of the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, committee member for many national sustainable farming policy groups and one very special appointment...Board Member of The Ark of Taste for Slow Food USA. "The Slow Food Ark of Taste is just that", says Mr. DeFelice, "a collection of foods that have remarkable flavor." "But those foods the Ark of Taste supports are threatened in some way and benefit from the Ark's focus on unique flavor and cultural importance." "The power to improve and sustain these important foods evolves from a national and international audience that respects and responds to the activities of The Ark of Taste," says Mr. DeFelice. "So Slow Food International and Slow Food USA promote these unique and flavorful foods by 'boarding' them onto the Slow Food Ark." Mr. DeFelice says "the selection process for boarding foods onto the Ark is

extensive and involves multiple tastings by professional chefs, submission and review of foodways documentation, verification and identity preservation and a rigorous discussion and voting protocol." "Few foods are boarded onto the Ark of Taste with only one voting session and the Ark almost never boards a food with a unanimous vote," says Mr. DeFelice.

"I was surprised and thrilled that Carolina Gold Rice was boarded onto the Slow Food Ark of Taste after my first submission with a unanimous vote," exclaims Mr. DeFelice. "The chefs and Ark of Taste board members were knocked out by the flavor appeal and texture of our rice." But Mr. DeFelice says he was not prepared for "the level of enthusiasm and fascination by the Ark of Taste chefs and board members with the foodways of Carolina Gold Rice Middlins (rice grits)." "We had to request additional rice for a second middlins tasting...that had never happened before as far as I know," says Mr. DeFelice. "I'd say the Ark boarding of Carolina Gold Rice is a grand slam for South Carolina and the foodways of the Carolina Rice Kitchen," declares Mr. DeFelice. "This is also an affirmation of the hard work by everyone at the Carolina Gold Rice Foundation."

Emile DeFelice thinks Slow Food will become the primary grassroots change agent for food quality and environmental impact advocacy in the USA over the next decade: "Just think of it, five years ago New York was the only East Coast center for a Slow Food events...today there are three vibrant convivia (the term for local Slow Food membership groups) right here in South Carolina alone and over one hundred nationally." "And, of particular importance for the future of Carolina Gold Rice, Slow Food Nation (the national Slow Food event planned for Labor Day weekend in San Francisco this year) will include Carolina Rice Bread, an oral history of Carolina Rice Farmers, chef demonstrations of Carolina Rice Kitchen dishes and food events incorporating our rice in ground-breaking regional food menus by the top chefs in America." "Most of the information to

support Carolina Rice at Slow Food Nation will come from the Carolina Gold Rice Foundation," says DeFelice. "Inclusion in the Slow Food Ark of Taste and support within the Slow Food Nation series of food events has the potential to revive serious international interest in Carolina rice, something we all care deeply about," declares DeFelice.

The Board of Directors, Officers and members of the Carolina Gold Rice Foundation are grateful for the advocacy and passionate support of Carolina Gold Rice repatriation by Emile DeFelice. Mr. DeFelice has rendered a remarkable and lasting contribution to our efforts. We salute and thank him.

More Information:
www.slowfoodusa.org/ark/gold_rice.htm

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Who First Planted Carolina Gold?

When early historians of Carolina agriculture told of the introduction of rice into cultivation, they unanimously spoke of white rice as the original crop in the colony, dominating production until "late in the last century" (i.e. the last part of the 18th century) when it was eclipsed by "gold seed rice." When gold seed rice came to be planted was a matter of debate. N. B. Cloud of The American Cotton Planter (1853) thought it "sometime before the Revolutionary War." But most commentators thought the introduction of the variety followed upon the peace of 1783. John D. Legare in an 1823 report of the South Carolina Agricultural Society on the importation of foreign seeds, noted that "the late Col. Henry Laurens imported a small quantity of what is called the Gold-seed Rice, soon after the revolutionary war, which was found to be so far superior to the white-hulled Rice before cultivated, that the latter is now scarcely to be met with" (American Farmer 24, p. 187).

Laurens, the famous patriot merchant and planter, who spent much of the Revolution captive in the Tower of London, until released in exchange for General Cornwallis. He remained in Europe, assisting in the negotiations of the Treaty of Paris ending the war. While mention is made that he imported the rice, no report exists that he planted it at Mepkin Abbey, when he attempted to rebuild the plantation after the war. He eventually returned home in 1784 to Mepkin. John Lewis Gervais, his agent, had overseen the planting of rice at Stono and Mepkin beginning in 1783. The papers of Henry Laurens for the period, however do not remark that the rice produced on his plantations was a new variety.

Indeed, the first person whom we know by name to have grown Carolina Gold Rice was Hezekiah Mayham. Colonel Mayham (1739-1789), best known to history as a fiery tempered officer in Swamp Fox Francis Marion's regiment, planted gold seed rice on his plantation abutting Pineville in St. Stephen's Parish, Berkeley County, South Carolina in 1785. Robert Alston, the most respected chronicler of Carolina rice culture in the antebellum period, in a summary of Gold Seed Rice, observed: "The ordinary crop rice most highly esteemed and therefore universally cultivated, an oblong grain 3-8ths of an inch in length, slightly flattened on two sides, of a deep yellow or golden color, awn short; when the husk and inner coat are removed, the grain presents a beautiful pearly-white appearance—an ellipsoid in figure, and somewhat translucent. This rice has been introduced into the Winyaw and Waccamaw region, since the revolution. It was planted by Col. Mayham, on Santee, in 1785. [The Commercial Review of the South and West, 1846, p. 327]

Who was Colonel Mayham and what had he to do with agriculture? He was from all accounts a bold and ambitious fellow. A member of the first Provincial Congress of South Carolina, he opted for military rather than political life, accepting election as captain in Col. Huger's regiment.

He fought in the Revolution throughout the lowcountry, participating in the siege of Savannah and the battle of Stono. He is most famous for capturing a bastion of Carolina loyalist, Fort Watson, by erecting a tower, and shooting down into the enclave over the walls forcing its surrender. The idea would be imitated several times subsequently on southern battlefields. Illness in 1781 forced Mayham's retirement from the field.

The economic uncertainty of the post-war era, particularly the inflation led to a situation where rice planters found themselves facing crippling debt. Mayham emerged as one of the ferocious men of the period, resisting foreclosures and championing debt relief in the legislature. Legend tells that when a sheriff came to serve Mayham debt papers, he forced the man to eat them. Rather than see the plantation system collapse, the government passed a series of debt relief bills throughout the 1780s.

Few memoirs present the life and works of Col. Mayham. They are not needed, because his memory has been preserved in the character of the most famous comic creation of early South Carolina fiction, William Gilmore Simm's rough-hewn cavalier, Captain Porgy. In *Sword and Distaff* the brash, jovial captain under Francis Marion, retires from the field, struggles against debt, and strives mightily to reconstitute his lands, life, and slaves in the wake of the war. There is little doubt that Simms based his character on Mayham.

The Revolution disrupted the economy and the planting cycles in the Peedee, Santee, and Waccamaw watersheds. Most importantly it disrupted the production of seed rice. In the absence of the usual local supply, Mayham and his fellow planters had to secure other stock. It is no wonder that a new variety—Gold Seed—happened to be planted in the region then. Whence did it come? No one knows. Why was Mayham's planting important? That can be determined with some accuracy. His grandson, Joshua John

Ward, master of Brookgreen plantation, friend of Robert Allston, and one of the great rice barons of antebellum South Carolina, traced his gold seed stock back to his grandsire. Ward to honor his forebear erected the four-sided inscribed monument over Mayham's remains in Pineville. Ward became the most important rice seed producer in the antebellum period.

It was out of the Mayham-Ward lineage of gold seed rice that long grain Carolina gold was developed. Long grain—5/12ths of an inch in length—weighed at 840 grains an ounce whereas short grain weighed 896 grains an ounce. In 1838 one of Ward's slaves discovered a panicle of unusually large grained rice during threshing. Ward had the seeds planted. By 1840 he had a half acre of seed in the field and by 1843 had expanded the output so greatly that his entire crop consisted of long grain. [The Cultivator 1844, p. 50]. It quickly became the market standard in the United States.



African Origin for Carolina Gold?

At the November 2007 meeting of the American Society of Agronomy, Anna McClung of the United States Department of Agriculture announced that she and Robert Fjellstrom had identified a genetic match for Carolina Gold rice in a sample of seed rice collected in 1972 in Ghana. The African variety, called Banko-ran, shared the key genetic marker, the RM 190 allele, that distinguishes Carolina



Season's End: CGRF President Glenn Roberts walks a field of Carolina Gold rice straw at Prospect Hill January 2008.

Gold from the multitude of world rice varieties. The presence of this genetic component, controlling starchiness, prompted McClung and Fjellstrom to seek 43 other molecular characteristics of Carolina Gold in the Bankoram sample. It possessed 42. When planted and grown, the rice greatly resembled Carolina Gold.

Several persons have attempted to discover the Old World ancestry of Carolina Gold Rice. In 2006, the Carolina Gold Rice foundation funded a rice collection trip in Indonesia seeking a parent strain on the island of Sulawesi. The seed collected there proved not to be related to Carolina Gold.

McClung and Fjellstrom examined 1,600 samples of rice germplasm looking for

ones that bore the RM 190 marker that appears in only 1 % of the world's rice varieties. All accessions that showed the marker were grown out to examine how the plants resembled or differed from Carolina Gold. Only thirteen bore enough structural resemblance to merit further exploration. When these were examined for the 43 other molecular markers, Bankoram emerged as the only approximate match.

More research remains to determine whether Bankoram was a native African evolution from *Oryza glaberrima* or may have been an African adaptation of Carolina Gold, whose cultivation spread globally during the nineteenth century. If it is a long-grain variety, then the great likelihood is that it is the latter case. If it is the

short-grained version, then the case for an African genesis of America's most famous historic rice variety is strengthened.

Know Your Heritage Vegetables:

Salsify (Oyster Plant) *Tragopogon porrifolius*

Only one variety, a biennial, was cultivated during the 19th century; black salsify, *scorzoneria*, was not a member of the oyster plant genus despite surface similarities in structure.

Both the root and the leaves are delicacies. In early spring, the young tops, the

leaves of which resemble leeks, were trimmed off, tied in bunches, and boiled until fork tender. Their taste resembles that of fiddleheads or asparagus. They were consumed with salt and melted butter. The quality of the greens improve during the second year of cultivation.

The long tapering root, somewhat thinner than a parsnip, required careful soil preparation, with over a foot of trenching and setting in well-manured topsoil. The plant is grown from seed. "The ground should be prepared in the fall, and left in ridges during the winter season. As soon as the weather becomes settled in the spring, the ground be neatly leveled off, and the seed sown in drills from twelve to eighteen inches apart, and covered to the depth of half an inch. When the young plants are about two or three inches in height they should be well thinned out, leaving them standing about six inches apart." The rows should be 20 inches apart at a minimum. Harvest began in late October and continued through winter. Those plants left alone to seed will grow three feet in height and be harvested for seed when they turn brown. An ounce of seed will produce a bed of plants suitable to feed a family.

Salsify Oyster Fritters: "As the oyster is a very celebrated fish, and many in the interior rarely obtain it, all may cultivate this vegetable, which really makes a near approach to it in taste, when cooked in the following manner: Previous to boiling the roots let them be slightly scraped, and then laid in water for about an hour; then boil them till quite tender. Let them be taken out and laid to drain for a short time, during which a thick batter should be made with the white of eggs beaten up with a little flour. Grate the roots down tolerably fine; press them into small flattened balls; dip these in the batter, and roll them into grated crackers on crumbs of bread; then fry them in a pan till they are of a deep brown color, when they are ready for the table, and will form a very agreeable and even delicious dish."

"Stewed Salsify: Wash the roots and scrape their skins, throwing them as you do so into cold water, for exposure to the air causes them to immediately turn dark. Then cut transversely into little bits, throw into fresh water, add a little salt, and stew in a covered vessel until tender. Now pour off the water, add a small lump of butter, a little pepper, and a gill of sweet cream."

"Fried Salsify: Stew the salsify as usual till very tender; then with the back of a spoon or small mallet mash it very fine. Beat up an egg, add a tea-cupful of milk, a little flour, butter, and seasoning of pepper and salt. Make into little cakes, and fry a light brown in boiling lard."

Salsify Soup"—Scrape the salsify nicely. Boil with white fowl until quite done. Mash through a colander, add a quart of new milk, a spoonful of butter, two or three eggs, and pepper and salt to your taste."

For Baking Salsify: Without scraping, boil until the skin comes off easily. Slice thin. Put into a china baking dish a layer of salsify, a layer of crumbs of bread, a little salt, pepper, and a covering of butter as thin as you can cut it. Repeat until full, with crumbs of bread for the top. Pour in then as much milk as the dish will hold, and bake brown. It may be done in half an hour."

J. W. Russell, "On the Culture and Uses of Salsify," *Horticultural Register* (March 1, 1836), p. 96.

"Salsify" *The American Farmer* 2, 4 (February 15, 1883), p. 54

"Culture of Salsify or Vegetable Oyster," *The Cultivator* 11, 6 (June, 1863), p. 183.

"Useful Recipes," *Harper's Bazaar* 7, 15 (Nov. 14, 1874), p. 743.

"Useful Recipes," p. 743.

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