



## PRESS RELEASE

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### WHITE HOUSE HISTORY SERVES UP A FULL PLATE OF COOKS AND COOKING FOR THE PRESIDENTS

#### White House Kitchens and Cooking Issue Number 20



One of the most important, but unknown adjuncts of presidential life, is the kitchen. White House kitchens, fired up first in November 1800, still cook and this issue of *White House History*, the semiannual journal of the White House Historical Association, assembles experts on cooking and White House appetites to tell the story of White House cooking. Articles on method, menus, the confectioner's art, and today's wine selection paint a unique picture of how the dinner table has and is prepared in the first house.

“The White House kitchens are famous only by default but none in the nation has operated so continually over two centuries to satisfy very particular eaters,” writes editor William Seale. “Jefferson’s love of European cooking is well known; less familiar is James K. Polk’s preference for turnip greens and cornbread over pate, or General Grant’s horrifying of the diplomatic community by serving generous slices of apple pie topped by rat cheese. LBJ’s barbecue, and those who cooked it, came up from Texas. About food, Lincoln could not have cared less. Ronald Reagan ate heartily but prudently, while the first lady was a master at appearing to eat while abstaining.”

This issue of *White House History* begins with a look back at “Kitchens Past: Thoughts on Open Hearth Cooking for the President” by Alice Ross; a picture history “A Look at the White House Kitchens” by assistant curator Lydia Barker Tederick provides the best “behind the scenes” look at one of the mansion’s busiest areas; “In My White House Years,” former pastry chef Roland Mesnier shares recollections of his more than 25 years at the White House. Today’s chef, Cristeta Comerford, describes how she prepared one of her most challenging dinners in “Preparation of the Menu for the Prince of Wales Dinner in 2005,” and well-known cooks and cooking scholars give tastes of food customs of years gone by in “Home Cooking in the White House” by Barbara Haber.

Daniel Shanks, assistant usher, talks about “White House Wines” and the wine steward’s challenge when choosing the crowning touch for one of the most important dinners in the world. In “A Bit of Architectural History Comes in From the Cold,” curator William G.

Allman tells how the removal of FDR's refrigerator revealed some early and forgotten history about how things once were at the White House.

*White House History* is published twice each year by the White House Historical Association and features articles on White House history, architecture, fine and decorative arts, and gardens, as well as stories about the occupants of the White House and their experiences living there.

*White House History* is available for \$6.95 per copy (plus packing and delivery). To order please call toll free 1-800-555-2451 or visit our web site [www.whitehousehistory.org](http://www.whitehousehistory.org)

The White House Historical Association, established in 1961, is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to enhance the understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the White House. All proceeds from the association's trusts, publications and other items are used to fund acquisitions of historic furnishings and artwork for the permanent collection, to assist in the preservation of public rooms, and further its educational mission.

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