

Centuries of Racialized Food for Thought: Columbia University, Slavery & the Food Industry

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Columbia University & Slavery Course

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Standing on Broadway, running between Barnard and Columbia's campuses, a daytime-glance is filled with street vendors sitting in trucks and carts selling a range of different foods, as the aroma of roasting coffee or toasted nuts fill the air. Stand in the same place post-midnight, and the same glance will be filled with students heading a few blocks downtown to any one of the neighborhood bars or restaurants, possibly looking to grab a late-night plate of fries from Tom's Restaurant. Drinking and eating are embedded in American college culture, acting as formative forces shaping the social sphere of student life at all hours of the day. Food industry entrepreneurs target college areas as locations to open restaurants, bars, and markets, knowing business will thrive off the patronage of on-the-go, social youths. New York City, however, is notorious nationally and globally for having one of the most vibrant nightlife's and food scenes comparative to other U.S. college cities. Yet, it was not always possible to stroll down a New York street at 3:00 a.m. and pass by cooking street vendors and lit up restaurants or supermarkets serving foods of various ethnic and cultural origins. This practice was shaped by a force many people may not think about as they buy their morning bagel slathered in cream cheese from a Broadway-stationed pushcart: slavery. It is important

to acknowledge the ways in which enslaved Black labor pre-abolition and free Black labor post-abolition stimulated New York's food industry. Whether it was through their forced labor on plantations and as cooks in white people's homes, or as the owners of restaurants and taverns where white and Black people intermingled, Black people forged New York City's dining culture, and the residue of their influence can be witnessed in the historic collegiate life of students at King's College and the modern one at Columbia University.

Columbia's relation to slavery and the food market dates back to the 18th century, when prominent families paid for their sons' King's College education with money they acquired through enslaved Black labor on plantations in the South and the Caribbean. Not only did the money garnered from these plantations allow King's College families to afford college tuition, it also sanctioned them as targets for recruitment by the college. King's College actively encouraged plantation-owning families in the South and the Caribbean to send their sons to school in New York because the college wanted affluent and influential families to help keep the school well-funded and financially afloat; the college's existence relied on its admittance of white merchant families and colonizers.[1]

An example of a prominent Columbia-affiliated family with ties to enslaved labor is the Codwise family, who owned sugar plantations in the West Indies. Born in 1730, George Codwise was a wealthy enslaver and merchant who primarily conducted trade between New York markets and West Indies plantations.[2] George's wealth and active participation in global commerce helped brand his son David as an ideal King's College candidate. David (1780-1864) graduated salutatorian in 1798 from King's College, and each tuition payment made by his father tightened Columbia's ties to slavery in St. Croix.[3] Columbia depended on enslaver families to accumulate wealth through the produce cultivated on their plantations, and to then give a portion of their wealth to the institution in exchange for their son's education; the college's economy relied on the slave and plantation economy. Essentially, slavery, colleges, and the food market collaborated to sustain inequity in race relations: white people could only afford college because of enslaved people's labor, and the college was able to exist because

of the plantation money continuously being poured into it. In this way, enslaved labor fueled the education and sustained the elite status of America's white population, while ensuring Black people were only engaged in physical work and remained uneducated. The physical labor enslaved people were forced to endure on plantations and for food cultivation allowed white people to engage in purely intellectual labor in safe and distant academic settings. King's College and the sugar plantation in St. Croix stand as specific sites in which there is a demarcation of Black people engaging in physical labor and white people engaging in intellectual labor. This demarcation and its collateral economic segregation would persist post-abolition and contribute to imbuing American society with hegemonic power structures related to social class, labor, and race. Furthermore, the distance between New York and St. Croix is a physical manifestation of the distance wealthy Columbia families placed between themselves and the behind-the-scenes labor needed to fill their markets with food; the geographic distance renders the trail of Black labor nearly invisible and un contemplated. White elites may have desired sugar to consume, but they were not going to harvest it themselves; they may have desired a King's College education, but they were not going to endure the labor conditions on plantations to earn their tuition money themselves.

David's interaction with enslaved people went beyond his family's mercantile relations and their slavery-operated plantations. David also interacted with enslaved people in a domestic setting while a student at King's College. In 1796, the Rhinelander family held a candle-making soiree at their home, which was a common winter tradition among 18th century social circles.[4] Like the Codwise family, the Rhinelander's wealth was rooted in enslaved labor, as they owned a sugar refinery and sugar was often cultivated in Caribbean-based plantations. The Rhinelander's son, William, was David's classmate and his attendance at King's College marks another tuition paid with slavery-linked money.[5] While the candle-making activities may be antiquated, other aspects of the party resonate with modern social events: inclusion of music, dance, food, and drinks. However, another majorly anachronistic characteristic of this party was its reliance on enslaved people's labor. Four Black people the Rhinelander's enslaved- Castor, Pollux, Phyllis, and Chloe- arranged the candle-making stations and played music.[6] In addition to serving the guests food and drinks, Phyllis and Chloe would

have also spent time in the kitchen prior to the event preparing the fare, which was likely an incredibly laborious task given the following description of the spread:

“Besides almost every seasonable variety of cold fowl and game, there were cold roasts of beef and spare-rib, and platters piled high with hot sausages and rollichies, while there was a great variety of pasties and boundless stores of sweetmeats and cake, placed all at once upon the big mahogany tables ... Tea was never seen at late suppers, and coffee but rarely. Wines, principally Madeira, were plentiful served, though punch and egg-nog were the main reliance.”[7]

Needless to say, food was fundamental to the event. Food was even incorporated into the home's décor, as dried herbs and ears of corn were hung from the ceiling.[8] The white elite in attendance were not the ones who kept the mansion-party functioning; Castor, Pollux, Phyllis, and Chloe were the glue of the social event. It is also important to note that since Castor, Pollux, Phyllis, and Chloe were charged with serving and entertaining the guests, their servitude and labor inevitably contributed to the event's atmosphere. Well-fed and well-served guests equate to happy guests, which then equates to a lively environment that would have reflected positively on the Rhinelanders. The success of the Rhinelanders' party largely relied on how well the enslaved people arranged the candle-making stations, cooked, and served food for the guests. Food has always been an important part of New York City's social sphere and, in this time period and at this particular event, there would have been no food or food service without enslaved labor. In other words, the presence and labor of the four enslaved people helped upkeep the Rhinelanders' family's privileged and hospitable image; the enslaved people both painted the image of the mansion party and were figures in that image.

The Rhinelanders were not the only Columbia-affiliated family who enslaved people for cooking purposes. During the Revolutionary War, wealthy families who lived near the Hudson River had their safety compromised, as their homes were prime attack targets for either British or Continental forces, depending on whether the family was dubbed one of patriots or loyalists.[9] The Livingstons were one of numerous families forced to flee, leaving New York for Connecticut. Accounts of the day of their departure

reference Colonel Henry Beekman's daughter's cook, who was described as being "a ponderous old negro woman." [10] As the Livingstons prepared to depart, the cook sat atop their packed kitchen utensils, food, and drinks, and channeled her anxieties by ordering around her grandson, the designated charioteer. She gestured to her instructions with "thrusts of a long-handled toasting-fork," which created a scene Beekman's daughter found entertaining, as she started laughing despite the perilous situation.[11]

Returning back to William Rhinelander and David Codwise, it is important to note they would have attended King's College's Park Place campus, located near today's New York City Hall. There is record of a black man named Gilbert Williams owning a tavern on East George Street, the modern-day Spruce Street, which would have been approximately only 0.32 miles or an 8 minute walk away from King's College's Park Place campus.[12] A Black-owned tavern at this time was not wholly unusual- the campus was surrounded by Black-run dining and nightlife, sometimes above ground but often below ground. "Below ground" is a literal description of some Black nightlife scenes of the late 18th to mid 19th century. The city was defined by a "vertical" divide, with many white people living in traditional above-ground homes and many Black people living in their cellars.[13] Living in the cellars allowed Black people, both enslaved and free, to sneak out into New York City's streets at night and intermingle, sometimes in Black-owned clandestine taverns, thus creating a distinct and often lively Black nightlife culture.[14]

From 1754-1776, before Rhinelander and Codwise were college students, King's College's was part of Trinity Church and it was only 680 feet from one of the most prominent public food markets of the time- Oswego Market. Oswego Market was originally located in the middle of Broadway between modern-day Liberty Street and Cortland Street, before moving a small distance away in 1772 to the middle of Maiden Lane between Liberty Place and Broadway after its mid-Broadway location was deemed a public nuisance.[15] Oswego Market provided a space in which white and enslaved Black people interacted simultaneously with very similar and very different purposes than those witnessed in the domestic arena of the Rhinelander's mansion party. Black

labor was used both to supply the food in these markets, as well as to maintain the market itself, just as Black labor was used both to supply the food at the mansion party, as well as to maintain the party itself. The main difference between Oswego Market and the mansion party, however, is monetary transactions and commerce between Black and white people occurred directly at the market. A man name Grant Thorburn was a frequent visitor of the market, and wrote letters describing how he would visit the market as the “Bergen negroes were packing up.”[16] The term “Bergen negroes” likely refers to enslaved Black farm laborers from Bergen County, New Jersey. Frequently, the produce sold in New York City’s markets came from enslaved people working on farms in New Jersey and Long Island, rather than in New York City. Thus, these enslaved people served as both farm laborers and travelling markets.[17]

Enslaved people from New York also contributed to the economic stability and lifespans of public markets such as Oswego through an indirect purchasing power; sometimes enslavers would send the people they enslaved to the market to buy produce for their homes.[18] An enslaved shopper at Oswego Market may have included Joe, a man enslaved by John Parker Custis. Custis was George Washington’s stepson, and he brought Joe to school with him when he enrolled at King’s College in 1773. Joe was known to cook Custis breakfast every morning while he was a student.[19] Any cooking ingredients Joe may have needed - from eggs to milk to bread- would have come from public markets fueled by Black labor such as Oswego, and likely from Oswego itself since it was one of the most trafficked markets of its time and near King’s College.

The Washington family’s relation to slavery in the King’s College area was not limited to Custis and Joe. While President of the United States, George Washington freed a woman he enslaved named Mary Simpson. In the early 19th century, approximately 0.45 miles or an 11-minute walk away from King’s College, Mary maintained residence at the corner of John and Cliff streets, where she opened her own food market. Mary was known to sell produce, such as eggs and milk, and baked goods, such as cookies and pies, as well as candy to people in the neighborhood. There is also record of her washing the local unmarried men’s clothing.[20] It is likely

clients of her washing business were also clients of her food market, and these bachelors likely included King's college students and alum. Such men also attended her annual birthday celebration for Washington, in which she baked a party-sized version of Washington's favorite cake and prepared coffee and punch to serve guests in her home.[21] Again, the "vertical" divide which defined 18th and 19th century New York City means it was not unusual Mary ran her business from a basement.

The market culture of New York City pre-dates Columbia's first charter, and the markets were not always selling food- sometimes they were selling people. New York City's first slave market opened at the corner of Wall and Water streets, and in 1726 it was called "The Meal Market" because it was also the only public market where grain produce could be legally sold.[22] The Slave/Meal Market helped another food industry flourish- a coffee house a short distance away called the Merchants Coffee House. This house became a meeting place for New York's bourgeoisie, political leaders, and- as indicated by its name- merchants. A convenient location near the Slave/Meal Market, which was a bustling hub of trade, drew merchants to the Merchants Coffee House instead of the formerly prominent Exchange Coffee House, which was a greater distance away.[23] Frequenters of the Merchants Coffee House included Gerard W. Beekman and Peter Van Brugh Livingston, of the prominent Columbia-affiliated families. G.W. Beekman signed a 1770 broadside encouraging other politically-minded men to meet at the coffee house to discuss the importance of voting ballot secrecy.[24] P.V.B. Livingston did the same thing, but in 1774 and to discuss a drafting of "Constitutional Resolves."[25] John Jay, a member of King's College's Class of 1764 and renowned New York City politician who currently has a Columbia dining hall and dormitory named after him, would have also been involved at the Merchants Coffee House. He signed a broadside referring to a meeting at the coffee house in 1774 about his and other men's delegation as representatives for the Continental Congress.[26] Distinguished members of New York's social and political society convened frequently at the coffee house to chat and drink coffee, when only about 315 feet away at the end of Wall Street near the East River, enslaved people were sold side by side with grains. This juxtaposition of white power and Black powerlessness amid casual eating, drinking, and food shopping scenes was a defining aspect of colonial New York's social landscape.

Another notable market opened in 1786, when King's College alum Henry Rutgers (Class of 1766), along with other Catharine Street residents, sought to open a public market in their neighborhood on the Catharine Slip.[27] Catharine Street and Slip were named by Henry's father, Hendrick, in honor of Henry's mother who was named Catharine. The area was once a part of the Rutgers' estate, and was surrounded by "elite Dutch mercantile families." [28] Jotham Post helped with the market's expansion and with implementation of a method for adding new stands to the market without disenfranchising the original butchers. Post's son, Jotham Post Jr. (1771-1817), graduated King's College in 1792 and was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives.[29] Catharine Market differed from other markets at the time, providing a distinct social function: public dances performed by both enslaved and emancipated Black people from New Jersey and New York.[30] In fact, Catharine Market is historically credited as being the origin site of "public 'negro dancing.'" [31] The dances served as a competition, in which the winners were awarded money or eels, as well as a form of entertainment for white spectators who would sometimes travel a considerable distance to watch Black people dance at Catharine Market. Often, the Black dancers were hired by butchers of the market.[32] This was likely a strategic marketing ploy, since the dancers brought spectators to the market who had the potential to become customers. Thus, Black people not only provided direct labor in food production and sales, but they also served as tools of promotion, customer engagement, and advertising for markets, such as Catharine Market, through engagement in labor not directly related to the selling and purchasing of food.

On some days, there were more enslaved people from Long Island and New Jersey at the Catharine Market than usual, specifically on holidays for which enslavers permitted enslaved people a day off. One of these holidays would have included Pinkster, which originated in 17th-century America with the settling of the Dutch. Pinkster occurred after Christmas, when the Dutch would give their servants a day off. In the 19th century, the holiday lost its association with the Dutch and gained association with Black people as they began to leave their own cultural imprint on the holiday. Black people, both free and enslaved, would set up stands in the streets to sell food and alcohol; there was also music, dance, and parades. [33] The event resembled

a carnival, and both Black and white children found Pinkster's happenings entertaining. The festival also helped garner business for New York City markets in the weeks prior to the festival's start. Catharine Market, for instance, was liable to have more Black dancers performing on the days leading up to Pinkster, as Black people often looked to earn extra money to spend on the food and goods sold by the festival's vendors.[34]

Some white people took issue with Pinkster's noise and liveliness. The festival culture was particularly vibrant in Albany. In 1811, the Albany Common Council passed a law ordering the following:

"No person shall erect any tent, booth or stall within the limits of this city, for the purpose of vending any spirituous liquors, beer, mead or cider, or any kind of meat, fish, cakes or fruit nor to collect in numbers for the purpose of gambling or dancing ... or to march or parade, with or without any kind of music during the days commonly called pinxter, under penalty of ten dollars or confinement in jail."[35]

The law did not directly ban Pinkster celebrations, but it forbade its fundamental activities specifically during the time of the celebration. Most of these banned behaviors involve eating and drinking alcohol, as these two activities were arguably the *pièce de résistance* of the event; as mentioned earlier, Black people would strive to earn extra money weeks in advance for the sole purpose of buying the festival's food and drinks. While Albany is over 100 miles away from Columbia, there still exists a relation to the school. When this law was passed, the mayor of the city of Albany was Philip Schuyler Van Rensselaer, the son of Stephen van Rensselaer II and Catharine Livingston of the Columbia merchant family.[36]

Rensselaer befitted greatly from his family's wealthy and educated pedigree; he was well-situated to win administrative positions and his last name wielded long-standing political clout that boosted his credibility on the civic stage. While he himself was not a Columbia alum, he was a member of a heavily Columbia-affiliated family. Families with money and political power often found a King's College degree helped them extend their legacies to future generations. With Rensselaer, one sees how

families deemed well-educated in New York City were positioned to easily pass laws that prevented Black people from celebrating their culture. In this case specifically, white political powers controlled Black people's ability to sell and purchase food during a socially important holiday. In order to fully understand the implications of the anti-Pinkster laws, one must remember Columbia was and remains a politician-making machine. In general, the masses trust people who are smart and therefore elect people they believe are smart, who are commonly defined as degree-holders at elite universities such as Columbia. American society has come to internalize a specific definition of smartness as common sense, and Columbia reinforced its association with "smartness" through exclusivity (ie: recruiting largely from wealthy, plantation-owning families or creating collegiate "royal" families through legacy preference).[37] Once these ivy-educated, often white alums enter the political force, they gain control over the daily lives of everyone under their jurisdiction and can reproduce their white elitist power by passing laws that regulate and police other citizens down to the most fundamental level of the food they eat, the drinks they drink, and the holidays they celebrate, as evidenced by the anti-Pinkster laws. Rensselaer's position as mayor, the anti-Pinkster laws passed under his leadership, as well as its effect on the Black community of Albany, epitomize the trickle-down effect of white power from the abstract political to the tangible every day. Overall, white political, social, and economic authority is constantly reinforced and reproduced at colleges and through food consumption, with the white educated class sometimes using food as a tool to micro-manage Black people's lives.

One final and vital note on the Pinkster festival: While Albany's Ordinance was a direct hindrance on an important Black cultural event, the preservation of the law's pronouncement provides insight into the types of food likely consumed at the event- namely various meats, fish, cakes, and fruit- as well as the types of drinks likely consumed at the event- namely spirits, beer, mead and cider.[38] Also, while street vending was essential to Pinkster, it was not exclusive to Pinkster or Albany in the 18th and 19th centuries. Colonial, downtown New York's streets were strewn with Black men and women peddling food such as oysters, clams, and hot corn.[39] The vendors would often shout slogans to garner the attention and interest of buyers. Charles Haynes Haswell, a New York native and jack-of-all trades who was a naval engineer, politician,

and historian, recorded his memories of New York City life. One of Haswell's recollections invokes the image of a Black woman selling hot corn as she shouts, "Hot corn, hot corn, here's your lily white hot corn; hot corn, all hot; just come out of the boiling pot!"[40]

While street food hawkers selling mollusks-to-go may sound odd now, 19th century New Yorkers were obsessed with gulping down oysters, and oystering was largely a black-dominated business. By 1810, directory records show that out of 27 New York City oystermen, 16 were Black.[41] Oysters were a defining aspect of a New Yorker's diet- they could be found on most dining menus in restaurants or for events, and they were cooked in a variety ways- stewed, fried, roasted, to name a few. The most famous oyster house in New York City was Downing's Oyster House, which was owned by free Black man, Thomas Downing, who was born to free Black parents in Virginia. His upbringing near southern shores helped him accumulate knowledge about sea creatures and seafood, from oysters to terrapin to clams to crabs.[42] Eventually, Downing moved to New York and brought his food knowledge with him, which earned him immense wealth since oysters were the trendiest food of the 19th century and consumed by the millions dollars' worth in New York City. The acclaim of Downing's oysters had international reach- he would ship oysters to Europe, specifically to Queen Victoria on occasion, and notable guests of his restaurant included Charles Dickens and the earl of Carlisle.[43] There is a tendency for the North to think its culture is less impacted by slavery and racism than that of the South. Historical understandings of the North tend to take the North's pro-abolition stance during the Civil War to mean its cultural, social, and economic bounds to slavery are wound together less tightly than those of the South. This is a myth, and part of this myth is embedded in a failure to account for Black people's migration from the South to the North and the cultural trends and knowledge they brought with them, as evidenced by Downing and his oyster business.

Downing was also enlisted to cater social events, and he was recruited to cater the Boz Boll in 1842, which was a celebration thrown on February 14th in honor of Charles Dickens when he visited New York City. Downing was paid \$2,200 to provide

the oysters.[44] People who would have planned for Downing's oyster's to be served at the Boz Ball, and eventually eaten them, would have included prominent Columbia alum and affiliates who were on the event's general committee, such as John D. Van Buren (Class of 1829) and Beverley Robinson Jr., who was the son of Beverley Robinson, a King's College alum who is listed in King's College's Black Book for assaulting a cook in 1771.[45],[46],[47] The Boz Ball was highly exclusive, with only the most elite of New York's society invited to attend. All attendees had their pedigree thoroughly inspected before receiving an invitation to dine with Dickens, and the ticket prices were \$5 for men and \$7 for women, which would have been a hardy fee at the time.[48] These requirements for attendance would have actively and extensively excluded Black Americans from attending the event- most of whom struggled financially in the years after abolition and lacked the clout-holding legacies of white colonizers. Yet, a wealthy Black man catered the ball. While America's white elite actively attempted to bar Black people from their social circles and create a hegemonic hierarchy of race through exclusive dining scenes, they were incapable of separating themselves from Black influence and culture- they relied on Black people to keep rudimentary social aspects of white society functioning.

The line between white, affluent attendees and Black food industry workers was represented through the cooking staff for the Boz Ball. The event was held at a theater, and a fire broke out on the fourth floor. Newspapers attributed the cause to the "carelessness of some negroes," who had started charcoal fires in the lobbies.[49] The fire was started intentionally, but not for the intent of burning down the building; the so-deemed "careless negroes" were cooks for the event and started the fire for cooking purposes. The fire was tamed before any severe damage was caused to the building or peoples' lives, largely because the ordeal occurred in an open space, far from flammable material which would have allowed it to spread.[50] Within white dining spaces, it is often likely the servers and preparers of the food were Black, but such workers are also often historically invisible; they stand behind a thick curtain of white society, affluence, and othering. While there exists countless records of the experiences of white guests at the Boz Ball, little record can be found on the accounts of the waiters or servers. This record about a fire outbreak offers a rare glimpse into who constituted

the backbone of New York City's food scene: Black Americans. However, this glimpse is still only from the perspective of white news reporters who possessed knowledge of the fire and its origins; it fails to centralize the experiences and narratives of the cooks themselves. With this report, Black history is remembered through the eyes of white people, which is important to remember when reading the articles, especially when reading the phrase "carelessness of some negroes." [51]

The Boz Ball was held at the Park Theater which, at the time, was owned by John Jacob Astor, William B. Astor Sr., and John Beekman of the wealthy Columbia-affiliated families. [52] The Beekmans' ties to New York City's food industry long pre-date their role in celebrating Dickens. The Beekmans were a merchant class family who both engaged in the transatlantic slave trade and personally enslaved people. It is worth noting nine Beekman family members maintain the title of King's College alum. [53] In 1749, at a time when New York City's rum supply was lacking but the demand for rum was not, William Beekman (1684-1770) purchased some from the Caribbean; the laws of supply and demand allowed W. Beekman to sell his rum for a significant profit. [54] Rum was typically made from distilled molasses, and molasses were produced by refining the raw sugar cultivated on the plantations in the West Indies, which relied on enslaved labor; this thus ties William Beekman to the transatlantic slave trade. [55] Later that year, Beekman traded his rum in Africa in exchange for money, Black captives, and assorted merchantable goods, further embedding himself into the transatlantic slave trade. [56] Fast-forward six years to 1755, and Henry Beekman becomes a founding governor of King's College. Fast-forward another 11 years to 1766, and Gerard Beekman, eventual enslaver of nine people, graduates King's College. [57]

The earlier Beekmans accumulated wealth through enslaved labor on plantations in the West Indies, which produced consumable goods the family could sell at markets. As time progressed and the social landscape of New York City changed, the Beekmans did not cut their ties to the food industry, nor their ability to profit from Black labor- they merely re-adjusted their ties by concerning themselves with the dining industry and profiting from Black influence on cuisine. The family transitioned from William Beekman profiting from rum and the Atlantic slave trade to John Beekman co-owning the Park

Theater, where Downing's oysters were served for the Boz Ball. The Beekmans stand as a prime example of how New York's most prominent families continuously derived and augmented their wealth through business at the intersection of the food industry and Black labor, which in turn helped fund generations of their family's King's College tuition.

The transition from enslaved Black labor on plantations and in white homes to free Black labor in the dining industry is not an unlikely evolution. Enslaved Black people, as witnessed at the aforementioned Rhinelander party, often found themselves working in white people's kitchens, cooking meals to fill the stomachs of white people. During the time of slavery, in the South especially, enslaved people regarded as "good cooks" were often valued for and identified by their culinary skills, as evidenced by fugitive slave advertisements. *Freedom on the Move*, a collaborative project between Cornell University's History department and the Cornell Institute for Social and Economic Research, is a database of digitized fugitive slave ads, in which enslavers described the people they enslaved who attempted to run away to freedom, as well as rewards for returning the so-deemed fugitives. Often, the ads listed skills of the enslaved people, such as abilities to read, write, barber, and cook. The database allows one to conduct a skill-based search of the advertisements, and a search for the skill "cook" returns eight different ads from New Orleans-based newspapers.[58] A common sentiment expressed in multiple advertisements was a fear enslaved people who could cook well would unknowingly be hired as cooks on ships heading to free states.[59] Thus, while white southerners valued cooking abilities in the people they enslaved, they simultaneously feared this skill's ability to help them gain access to and assimilate to a free life. In fact, cooking did help previously enslaved people economically and, subsequently, socially adapt to American society post-manumission. Many enslaved Black people were subjected to a life of illiteracy due to enslavers oppressing their education. If freed Black people wished to have a career post-manumission which required reading and writing, there could have been a significant time gap between learning the necessary skills and earning the necessary money to survive. Even if a freed Black person possessed the ability to read and write, such career openings were liable to have a racially exclusive and prejudice hiring process. Previously enslaved

cooks, however, often found the cooking skills they developed in their enslavers' kitchens could earn them money post-manumission and, in some cases, a lot of it. Cooking careers also allowed freed Blacks to earn money more speedily than those careers which would have required them to develop reading and writing skills first. While it is difficult to track down and record every Black person who worked in the food industry after their manumission due to the vast nature of the industry and lack of documentation of Black labor, historian Shane White overlaid data from the 1800 and 1810 U.S. Census records with data from New York City directories from the same years to pinpoint the occupations of 111 free Black men in 1800 and 262 free Black men in 1810 who were considered the heads of their households by the census records. According to White's findings, out of the 111 free Black men he identified from 1800, 14 were involved in the food industry (12.6%), while out of the 262 free Black men he identified from 1810, 22 were involved in the food industry (8.4%).^[60]

Previously, when discussing fugitive slave ads, I did not refer to New York ads but rather New Orleans ads. While it may seem strange and distant, both geographically and ideologically, to thread New Orleans into this conversation regarding Columbia University, slavery, and the food industry, it is important to recognize Louisiana as a cultural hub for Black Americans, specifically for the development of Black cuisine, which eventually spread outwards to other places in America. In particular, New Orleans serves as the site of the sprouting for the prominent Black cultural phenomenon of Creole cuisine, which eventually found a stronghold in New York City's dining scene with waves of Black migration from the South to the North.

Creole cuisine frequently entered New York City's 18th and 19th century predominantly white dining spaces. As evidenced by the content of various dining menus, Columbia University and its students often found themselves at the center of these dining spaces. For instance, before John Jacob Astor and William B. Astor Sr.'s Park Theater was the site of white people dining over Downing-catered oysters, John Jacob Astor opened the Astor House in 1836, two years after the commencement of its construction. The Astor House was a modern luxury hotel located between Barclay and Vessey Street on Broadway, placing it approximately only 895 feet away from King's

College's Park Place campus and 250 feet away from the Astor's Park Theater. Guests of the hotel included prominent figures such as Abraham Lincoln, who stayed and delivered a speech at the hotel while making the trek to his 1861 inauguration. The hotel, being a "luxury" hotel, was likely similar to the Boz Ball: expensive and exclusive. In other words, while the Astor Place may not have outwardly denied Black people entry, it being dubbed a "luxury" hotel implies a place filled with white, wealthy, and public figures; the price of stay likely financially deterred recently freed Blacks or Blacks who were born into freedom, but were set back financially due to their families' previous generations of enslavement, from staying at the hotel. The hotel was demolished on May 29, 1913, in which a farewell dinner and menu was prepared. The menu's soup offerings included Creole essentials, such as green turtle, chicken gumbo, and oyster, and an entire section of the menu was dedicated to differently prepared oysters.[61]

There are various other examples of Creole food appearing in New York City's dining sphere. On February 26, 1896, there was a dinner at Hotel Savoy on the corner of 5th Avenue and 59th Street- specifically the "Dinner to the Hon. Richard Croker." [62] At this time, Columbia's campus was located in Midtown at 49th Street and Madison Avenue, only 0.50 miles or an 11-minute walk from Hotel Savoy. Richard Croker became the leader of Tammany Hall in 1884, and was still the leader of the political machine at the time of his namesake dinner.[63] The menu for Croker's dinner included traditional Creole cuisine, such as chicken gumbo, clear green turtle soup, and terrapin, while the guest list includes Columbia alum Robert A. Van Wyck.[64] A year after this dinner, Croker helped Van Wyck win an 1897 election and become the first mayor of New York City's five boroughs.[65] This is one of various occasions in which political connections were built in Black-influenced social, dining, and drinking settings.

Fast forward to the 20th century, and on April 19, 1902, alumni of Columbia University held a dinner in honor of the president of the University at the time, Nicholas Murray Butler, and "huitres du Cape Cod," or oysters from Cape Cod, were served.[66] In 1910, Columbia University hosted Cornell, University of Pennsylvania, Syracuse, and University of Wisconsin for the Intercollegiate Boat Races at the Columbia University Club. The event included a luncheon and collation, with a menu offering "country style"

fried chicken.[67] Fried chicken has developed associations with both Black and Southern America, but fried chicken has ties to all over the world, on nearly every continent. Many historians actually trace fried chicken to have Scottish origins, who opted to diverge from the English methods of boiling and baking chicken and brought their cooking styles with them when they colonized America's South. Eventually, enslaved people who were allowed to keep their own chickens on the plantations on which they worked adopted this cooking method, and the concept of frying chicken started to lose its ties to the Scottish and gain ties to Black Americans.[68] Many enslaved cooks who developed the skill of frying chicken used this skill post-manumission to earn money and passed on their recipes to their future generations, who also found frying skills useful on the job market. In the 1920s, when Columbia University had been settled into its Morningside Heights campus for a little over two decades, southern Black Americans switched from looking to Chicago as their primary destination when moving North and started looking to Harlem, which sits right above Morningside Heights. Harlem was not always New York's hub for Black culture- first Black Americans tended to cluster in downtown New York and then in the vicinity of Greenwich prior to migrating uptown. [69] In fact, the movement of Black enclaves from downtown to midtown to uptown coincides with the movements of Columbia's campus. Harlem's white population left with the arrival of Black residents, rendering Harlem a blank canvas on which aspiring Black entrepreneurs in the food industry left their cultural imprint. Since many of the new Black Harlem residents, both the cooks and consumers of food, came from the South, what was once dubbed southern food, such as fried chicken, okra, and collard greens, became dubbed Black or "Soul" food in the North. [70] Lillian Dean Harris, also known as "Pigfoot Mary," was one of Harlem's most famous food industry entrepreneurs. Unable to read or write, a teenage Dean ran away from her Mississippi home and ended up in New York City in 1901. Once settled in Harlem, Dean started selling the food of her southern childhood out of a baby carriage on 60th street and Amsterdam Avenue, with her pigs' feet specialty earning her the nickname "Pigfoot Mary." Eventually, she abandoned the baby carriage and upgraded to a self-designed steam table. When the residents of Harlem began to migrate further north in 1917, Dean joined the crowd and brought her cooking skills to the corner of 135

and Lenox Avenue.[71] Columbia's Morningside Heights campus stood approximately only 1.22 miles from Dean's business.

Columbia's continued closeness to Harlem means it remains surrounded by Black-inspired food, with its students attending many of the dining venues to satisfy their eating needs. In 1962, Sylvia Woods, also known as the "Queen of Soul Food," opened Sylvia's Restaurant in Harlem, which currently stands approximately 1.30 miles away from Columbia; it would take a student about 25 minutes to reach the restaurant by foot and about 14 minutes by subway. Woods came to New York in 1944, leaving behind her farm life in Hemingway, South Carolina to waitress the restaurant she would eventually own.[72] Her restaurant's menu maintains historic links to southern Black culture, offering entrees such as "Sylvia's Down Home Fried or Smothered Chicken," "Cornmeal Dusted Catfish Fried To Golden Perfection," and "Salmon Cakes and Two Eggs." Side orders include collard greens, okra and tomato gumbo, and candied yams, while the desserts include sweet potato pie, peach cobbler, and strawberry bread pudding with bourbon sauce.[73] The restaurant has been known to attract famous clientele, including various notable Columbia alumni, such as law school graduate, diplomat, and author Caroline Kennedy.[74] Ossie Davis, who attended Columbia University's School of General Studies, dined at Sylvia's with his wife and fellow NAACP Image Award Hall of Fame inductee, Ruby Dee.[75],[76] In 2007, Barack Obama met Al Sharpton at Sylvia's to discuss political issues, public policy, and his 2008 presidential campaign.[77]

20th and 21st century Harlem catered to the palette of its predominantly Black residents who migrated to New York City from the South. However, as analyzed in this paper, Black cooks were not- and still are not- always cooking Black-crafted dishes for Black people. 18th-20th century dining scenes, such as the Boz Ball and Columbia's boat races, exemplify an appropriation of Black food culture by primarily white spaces; at most of these dining venues, a room filled with New York's white elite dined over Black food, but excluded Black people from the dining experience. This is a form of segregation. Segregation in the South was explicit, but segregation in the North was implicit. The South's Jim Crow laws often forced Black people into different, lower-

quality dining spaces than white people. In the North, there was a line drawn between Black people who worked behind the counters, stoves, and ports supplying and preparing food and the white people who were served and consumed the food, but this line was drawn by coded language, trickle down effects from economic inequity, and implied understandings some spaces were for white people and white people only. Yet, despite evident efforts to maintain a racial segregation among social dining scenes, Black people, whether they made the trek to Manhattan and became culinary entrepreneurs à-la Downing style or were enslaved workers on merchant families' sugar plantations, hold authority in shaping American cuisine. Undeniably, Black people's work with food, both pre- and post- abolition, left a cultural imprint on New York City's dining scene and Columbia University's social sphere. For instance, today John Jay dining hall sometimes hosts "Soul Food" themed dinners, with pans of fried chicken and collard greens lining the buffet station. Mardi Gras is also celebrated in both Ferris and John Jay dining halls with the serving of some traditional Creole dishes from New Orleans, Louisiana. Inextricably, Columbia University, slavery, and the food market are bound together by cultural, social, and economic threads- threads which have been continuously woven across the span of multiple centuries.

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