A Week With Michael Twitty — Insightful, Fascinating, and Absolutely Delicious

“Where’s the saw?” is probably a question you rarely have uttered yourself . . . but we embraced the unusual during culinary historian Michael Twitty’s week-long residency at Locust Grove in late May.

Michael Twitty is an authority on African American foodways and their influence on American cuisine, particularly in the South. His book, The Cooking Gene, recently won two James Beard awards for food writing.

His book and his blog Afroculinaria are deeply researched in several ways — through written documentation, oral tradition, and practical experimentation. He grows heirloom varieties or works with farmers to grow them. He then cooks and serves the food according to traditional ways.

Beyond the food itself, Twitty honors the lives of “the ancestors” by cooking in the garb and persona of the enslaved and free black cooks of early America. He’s researched and explored their lives and contributions to what we now take for granted as simply American food.

“Traditionally, the plantation is a place where architecture and windows and wallpaper are lauded — but the bodies who put them up are not,” Twitty says.

During his time at Locust Grove, Twitty gave two presentations about cooking in Africa and America for our staff and volunteers, along with invited guests from other local historic sites. He reflected on the ways that the lives of the enslaved in places like Locust Grove are presented to the public.

He’s spent time at plantations and farms in the south, cooking and talking. He’s seen the many ways that slavery is presented and how it is perceived. “Traditionally, the plantation is a place where architecture and windows and wallpaper are lauded — but the bodies who put them up are not,” Twitty says.

In The Cooking Gene, Twitty takes readers on a “journey through African American culinary history in the Old South” as he traces his ancestry — both black and white — through food. He did the same for those fortunate enough to participate in the events at Locust Grove that week in May.

Twitty — assisted by several Locust Grove volunteers — cooked in our hearth kitchen and was filmed by a popular TV travel show while doing so. (We’re sworn to secrecy on the details — but when the show airs, we’ll reveal all on our website: www.locustgrove.org.)

On Tuesday evening, a crowd of southern food fans delighted in his hearth supper and talk. They feasted on sautéed greens, kush (a delicious cornbread dish), Country Captain (a flavorful chicken dish with influences from Caribbean ancestors), rice, sweet potato pie, all washed down with sweet tea.

But the show-stopper was the sheep roast on Thursday. Volunteers dug a 4-foot by 6-foot pit near the wood shop, filled the bottom with firewood, and placed saplings as slats over the top. The sheep was sourced from the nearby organic Rootbound Farm.

“All day long, Michael mop-basted the meat in the cooking tradition he learned in Senegal,” says Brian Cushing, Locust Grove’s program director. “He has established a clear correlation between the barbecue styles in Senegal and those in Kentucky. It was a long, hot, smoky, fascinating day.”

The barbecued sheep was the centerpiece of Thursday evening’s food experience, with accompaniments of rice, greens, and a sweet potato salad. “That delicious salad clearly was a hit because there was not a single morsel left,” declares Cushing.

The week ended with a talk by Twitty about the central themes of his work to an appreciative audience, who also were surprised to be served a full meal afterwards — all the delicious leftovers from a generous week of cooking.

Twitty Week was hot, a bit chaotic, aromatic, mouth-watering, smoky, and insightful — and one of the most meaningful programs we’ve ever experienced at Locust Grove.

Kudos to ‘Twitty Week’ Volunteers

Essential to the week’s success are the many Locust Grove volunteers who helped Twitty bake, cook, dish up, and deliver the foods that the guests devoured. The ones not pictured in the photo include: Heather, Jason, Jocelyn, and Noah Hiner; Marlan Ingram; Amy Liebert; Irene Rawlings; Rosalind Scott; Diane Statler; Keith, Kelly, and Tom Stevenson; Lori Stahlgren; Sarah Sutherland; Jeannie Yezeau; and Paula Wolf. Thank you.

With Michael Twitty are intrepid volunteers (from the left) Judy Chang, Sharron Hilbrecht, intern Sidney Edwards, and Jane Sterner.
**Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, was usually known as just “Lafayette.”**

So much simpler that way. He was such an extraordinary figure in American history that he seems almost fictional. How and why could one man have made such a difference, across the wide Atlantic from his home in Auvergne in rural France?

Born into a very wealthy aristocratic family and orphaned at a young age, he married young and became a father young. And — still in his teens — he became so enthralled by the rebellion in Britain’s American colonies that he defied his family, abandoned wife and child, and jumped ship for the Revolution.

Begging the Continental Congress and its military leader for a role in the fight, he was wounded at Brandywine, wintered at Valley Forge (spending time with Washington, Hamilton, and Major William Croghan), before realizing that his best role was as a negotiator of French military and financial support for the rebels.

France, always England’s staunchest enemy, responded with “guns, and ships, and so the balance shifts.” (I’m quoting the musical Hamilton here.) With the strong fleet of France’s Count Rochambeau in the Chesapeake, British forces at Yorktown didn’t stand a chance. The dual strike on British barbicanies by the Continental — led by Hamilton and Lafayette — broke the siege and led to the surrender at Yorktown. Major Croghan, on parole, watched and huzzah’d from the sidelines.

Returning home to France, Lafayette worked with Thomas Jefferson to reduce America’s debts to France and to encourage the abolition of slavery. An early leader of the French Revolution, inspired by Jeffersonian principles, Lafayette was unable to unite France’s murderous factions and spent years in prison in Austria. Released, he returned to public service.

How and why could one man have made such a difference, a true Kentucky treasure?

**On his grand tour in 1824–25, the Marquis de Lafayette visited all 24 states, stopping in Louisville in 1825. Lucy Croghan was able to see this acclaimed figure in person, and he almost visited Locust Grove, as Lucy’s eldest son John Croghan wrote to his brother-in-law, T. S. Jesup, in May 1825:**

> “You will perceive through the medium of the public print our reception of LaFayette. It was creditable to our town and gratifying to our illustrious guest. The ladies of the town & country generally waited on him and among them were Aunt Anderson & my Mother. I regret that he had not time to visit Locust Grove, in as much as he promised to do so but I’m glad he saved his time to spend in the town & country for he was so friendly & kind to them. ...”

Although Lafayette’s busy schedule prevented him from being received at Locust Grove, he is remembered here today in the Farm Office of the museum house hangs a print of the Marquis de Lafayette — fittingly opposite a print of George Washington. The mezuzot engraving by Philibert-Louis Debussot depicts a full-length portrait of Lafayette standing next to his horse, and seen in the background is a large formation of troops on a parade ground.

A museum purchase from 1982, this print underscores the significant role Lafayette played in the American Revolution, in which both George Rogers Clark and William Croghan fought.

Croghan, who greatly admired Lafayette, would certainly have been acquainted with him as both men served at the Battle of Brandywine and during the Valley Forge winter.

**Director’s Letter Carol Ely, Ph.D.**

A commemorative banner from Lafayette’s “victory lap” tour of the U.S. in 1824–25.
Kentucky and the Value of History

Kentucky’s milestones through song. Performers will be on the Parlor of the historic house. This venerable series offers concertgoers a unique opportunity to delight in music that the Clarks and Craghans would have heard in the room where they most likely would have enjoyed it — the second-floor Great Parlor of the historic house. In this concert, you’ll enjoy two exciting young artists. Baroque violinist Alice Cullin-Ellison is joined by harpsichordist John Austin Clark as they take a baroque violinist’s journey through Europe. The concert will feature works by Bach, Couperin, and Geminiani.

Restaurants at 5 p.m., with the concerts beginning at 5:30 p.m. Individual concerts are $20 each. We also offer season subscriptions — Patron, $200; Supporter, $150, and Subscriber, $70. To purchase season subscriptions, please call Locust Grove at (502) 897-1945. For dates and titles of the 2018-2019 series, see “Concerts” box on page 6.

Frankenstein: A Reading Performance

It’s Philadelphia, 1798. George Rogers Clark (Matt Douthit) will be in the camp with his newly formed Illinois regiment. They’ll be joined by British Dragonos and Marines, Scottish Highlanders, and Hessians — along with their wives and children. New this year is a special exhibit of antique Kentucky rifles by Mel Hankla. And Marlan Ingram, who portrays a manumitted (freed) slave circa 1780, will give a talk. You can visit the camps, talk with reenactors, and watch mock battles for independence. Enjoy singers, puppeteers, Punch & Judy, and a fortune teller. Watch demonstrators doing 18th century tasks and crafts — along with a weaver with her sheep. And as always, you can enjoy delicious period-style foods and drinks. Admission for adults is $8 and children, $4.
Thanks to Our Recent Donors

Donations received from Enrollment/Renewal from April 1 through June 30, 2018

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- For your generous contributions to Locust Grove!
- Locust Grove's volunteers.
- Lynn's many contributions to Locust Grove for nearly 40 years.
- The Audrey Pilkington Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes award winners who have offered a lifetime of dedication and have provided support to Locust Grove. In 1998, it was named for Audrey Pilkington in 2000 in recognition of her pioneering work and positive energy in nurturing Locust Grove's volunteers.

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A Baroque Violinist's Journey through Europe

EMILIE STRONG SMITH CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES

SCHEDULE 2018-19

Locust Grove will celebrate its 125th season of the Emilie Strong Smith Chamber Music Series. See page 8 for ticket information. Concert descriptions are available at www.locustgrove.org.

A Baroque Violinist's Journey through Europe

Audrey Pilkington Lifetime Achievement Award Winner — Lynn Swetnam Booth

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Sarah Vowell, New York Times’ bestselling author of Lafayette in the Somewhat United States, will speak with Tara Anderson of Louisville Public Media about everyone’s favorite fighting Frenchman, Lafayette, and his connections to American independence.

Lafayette was to dine at Locust Grove in 1825, but had to decline. In September, we’ll keep that engagement on Lafayette’s behalf.

It starts with a Conversation between Sarah Vowell and Tara Anderson, followed by a Grand Dinner under a candelit tent in the allée leading to the historic house. The menu for the dinner is based on recipes from the early years of the 19th century.

For ticket information and details about the program and the dinner, go to www.locustgrove.org/lafayette.