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**BENE LEGERE**NEWSLETTER OF THE  
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## NEWS FROM BANCROFT LIBRARY

**WHAT'S COOKING AT THE BANCROFT LIBRARY**

On August 26 2001, The Bancroft Library celebrated the acquisition of historical documents and images from Chez Panisse, the renowned Berkeley restaurant operated by Alice Waters (Class of 1967, Alumna of the Year, 1999), with the opening of it's new exhibition, "California Culinary Culture: Sampling the Collections of The Bancroft Library." The exhibition drew upon Bancroft's rich collection of California cookbooks and menus, in addition to a selection of other culinary publications, photographs, albums, advertisements, posters, letters, and oral history transcripts from the 1850's to the present. These historical resources highlighted California's role in the development of culinary trends and practices, and included selected materials from Chez Panisse, a restaurant that helped revolutionize eating and dining in the United States and abroad.

California's cuisine is shaped by many cultures, strengthened by the bounty of the land and waters, and polished by technological developments in agriculture, transportation, and communication. The exhibit sought to represent California's indigenous peoples, early European settlers, and later immigrants, each with its own culinary traditions. California's Native Americans took advantage of abundant wild game and seafood, acorns, grains, berries, fruits and nuts, and edible plants. Settlers from Mexico, Spain, Italy, France, China, Japan, left their culinary imprint on the state, adding the distinctive ingredients and recipes of their particular cultures.

The traces of this potpourri of cultures are found in California's culinary innovation, its willingness to try the new and unexpected. The recent exhibit focused not on the early chefs of the state who tested their skills on sometimes discriminating clientele, but also the home cooks, concerned with satisfying hungry family members and friends. A certain sophistication in California's cuisine followed the arrival of a population of writers and artists, educated and



The poster "Chez Panisse Café & Restaurant Thirtieth Anniversary," with descriptive text concerning the recent exhibit "California Culinary Culture: Sampling the Collections of The Bancroft Library," is offered in a limited edition of 400. Designed and printed by graphic artist David Lance Goines, this poster celebrates an exhibit of culinary books, menus, and other materials from the collections of The Bancroft Library.

refined travelers, and international business people and professionals who came to demand more from California's cooks.

Items in the exhibit included Gold Rush Era menus from noted San Francisco restaurants and hotels; nineteenth century photographs of the California wine industry by Eadweard Muybridge and unattributed photographs of Chinatown markets and restaurants; transcripts of oral history interviews with contemporary figures such as Robert Mondavi, Chuck Williams, and Polly Ghirardelli; and cookbooks from such California culinary icons as Helen Evans Brown. Additional materials on display include contemporary menus from a wide range of Bay Area restaurants; photographs and publications that address the social aspects of food and diet during the 1960's; and books and pamphlets that illuminate the technical and commercial preparation of food for railroads and other service industries.

Historical materials from the records of Chez Panisse included correspondence between Alice Waters and M.F.K. Fisher, the noted culinary author. A selection of Chez Panisse menus, particularly those holiday and special occasion menus produced by leading printers and graphic artists offered both a visual and sensual treat, as did a series of Chez Panisse cookbooks presented with elegant illustrations. Chez Panisse posters, the work of David Lance Goines, added additional luster to an exhibit that celebrated the nourishing effects of fine dining and fine printing.

Alice Waters graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1967 with a degree in French Cultural Studies. She then trained at the Montessori School in London, followed by a year traveling in France. Alice is author and co-author of several books, including *The Chez Panisse Menu Cookbook*, *Fanny at Chez Panisse*, a storybook and cookbook for children, and, most recently, the encyclopedic *Chez Panisse Vegetables*. She has also received numerous awards, which include being named one of the ten best chefs in the world in 1986, by the magazine *Cuisine et Vins du France*; Best Chef in America and Best Restaurant in America, from the James Beard Foundation, in 1992; and an honorary degree from Mills College, Oakland, California, in 1994.

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