

Thomas Jefferson's Table

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May 6, 2013
Senior Honors Thesis**

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Author's Preface

As Joseph Ellis states in the preface to his biography of Thomas Jefferson, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson*, anyone who chooses to write yet another work about the Virginian must include “a formal declaration of the causes that have impelled the author to undertake the effort.”¹ I, too, will explain the principle reason for my addition to this historical conversation.

This project began as a semester paper in Georgetown University Professor Susan Pinkard's Food in Western History seminar in the Fall of 2011. I presented “The Culinary Interests of Thomas Jefferson: Francophilic or Cosmopolitan” at the Phi Alpha Theta Biennial Convention in January 2012 and the Phi Alpha Theta Mid-Atlantic region conference the following March. The discussion inspired at these panels made me realize that my research was not even close to being finished. To satisfy my own curiosity, I would need to revisit my own argument and claims in the interest of scholarship and good historiography. The Senior Honors Thesis program has given me this opportunity.

My work has fallen into the midst of an ongoing conversation about food and the Founding Fathers, demonstrating that despite the scholarship of generations of historians, the topic is still relevant. For the most part, however, this examination tends to fall more into the realm of popular history. Myths surrounding the Founding Fathers proliferate and become more firmly entrenched in the minds of Americans as decades pass. Jefferson is no exception, and as interest in Jefferson's culinary curiosity increases, so do the fables concerning his garden and kitchen. Jefferson probably did not introduce ice cream to the United States, though he did bring back a recipe from France. Similarly, Thomas Jefferson did not make macaroni and cheese popular in America *just* because he served it at the President's House.

Jefferson's interests in cuisine and entertaining deserve a place in scholarly academic conversation. Researchers and historians at Monticello and the Thomas Jefferson Foundation have worked tirelessly over the last few decades to restore and preserve Jefferson's legacy. To them, and especially to Peter Hatch, Director of Garden and Grounds at Monticello, historians of Jefferson owe a great debt. Works such as Hatch's "*A Rich Spot of Earth*": *Thomas Jefferson's Revolutionary Garden at Monticello* and John Hailman's *Thomas Jefferson on Wine* contribute invaluable research to the field, though the works generally highlight only one of Thomas Jefferson's specific interests. With this approach, however, historians have missed a distinct opportunity to study the confluence of Jefferson's many interests – gardening, farming, architecture, design, the intellectual pursuit of knowledge, philosophy, Virginia and international cuisine, wine, dining atmosphere, service, presentation, and conversation – in the setting in which they coalesced – his "Table."

Jefferson's Table is not simply the most prominent piece of furniture in his dining room. I coin the term, hereafter capitalized, to explain Thomas Jefferson's philosophy that inspired an experience of dining in a space dedicated to an artful display of excellent food and wine enjoyed by a group of equals engaged in enlightened conversation. His Table developed over the course of his lifetime and changed as circumstances allowed or dictated. Though the aspects of the Table evolved with experience and exposure as time passed, entertaining and cultivating his interests remained anchoring activities in Jefferson's life, providing distraction and escape from the world around him. No matter his age, Jefferson enjoyed his Table, deriving greater delight from sharing this experience with others, and his infectious enthusiasm is passed to those to undertake a study of it.

In writing, I chose not to include a full biography of Thomas Jefferson. Shelves in libraries groan under the weight of those volumes already undertaken by historians for almost two centuries. I suggest Jon Meacham's new *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power*, Joseph Ellis' *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson*, or Dumas Malone's four-volume classic, *Jefferson and His Time*, for further reading.

Acknowledgements

Like the mountain of debts that Thomas Jefferson incurred throughout his life, I, too, am deeply indebted to a great number of people whom I will never be able to repay for their patience, their kindness, and their support.

First, I would like to thank the AP United States History teacher to whom this thesis is dedicated. Mr. Gary Okey taught me to love history, but he taught me much more than that. More importantly, he taught me to teach myself and how to write, and I came to Georgetown prepared for college because he, and many other teachers at Carondelet High School, demanded nothing less than my best. For that, I will be forever grateful.

Every professor who has taught me here at Georgetown has contributed to the success of this project in some way. There are some, however, that I must name specifically for their constant help, advice, and support in the last four years.

Professor Susan Pinkard agreed to advise me on this project, but her lecture on foodways in Europe in the fall of 2009 inspired my interest in culinary history and convinced me to be a history major on the spot. Professor Alison Games showed her support for this project in more ways than I can count, sharing not only her expertise in early American history, but giving advice on running and even cheering me on at Mile 7 as I ran the Marine Corps Marathon.

Someone once described Professor Chandra Manning as the calm, reassuring “voice of reason.” I have found this description perfectly accurate day in and day out over the last two semesters, but especially in those moments when all thesis writers need a bit of reassurance. She went above and beyond to advise her students, commenting on each person’s work with the utmost care and attention. Her contribution this year, along with Professors Spindel and Astarita’s years of dedication to the Honors Thesis Program, make the program the enriching experience that it is.

The greatest debt I will never be able to repay is to my parents. I would like to thank them for their unending love and support and for the greatest gift they have given me, my education.

For my final note of gratitude, I can only quote the genius of historian Peter Gay when he wrote, “Life is a shipwreck, but we must not forget to sing in the lifeboats[.]”² On some days, this thesis project was smooth sailing, but most of the time it was an absolute shipwreck. I need to thank all of my fellow thesis writers who sang with me in the lifeboats as we rowed our way through this last year. The laughs and snacks we shared together made those hours we spent writing, critiquing, and commiserating all the more memorable.

Chapter I: Introduction

[U]nder total want to demand except for our family table I am still devoted to the garden. but tho' an old man, I am but a young gardener.¹

– Thomas Jefferson to Charles Wilson Peale, Monticello, August 20, 1811

The hot summer sun begins to set over a Virginia plantation. As the shadows lengthen, more than a dozen figures emerge from a Palladian villa of brick set atop a little mountain. Leaving the dining room where they had long lingered, talking of Paris, travels, wine, and philosophy, they walk towards the South Terrace. Children run ahead of the mingling adults, always returning to one standing out among the group. The tall elderly man, over six feet in height with broad shoulders and a bony frame, walks with a stick. As the group nears the kitchen garden, a patch of earth nearly one thousand feet long, and strolls a dirt path called Mulberry Lane, the old man points to his favorite plants with his cane, explaining their origins, when they were sown, and when they will be ready for harvest. This man, though he hardly looks it, has just left the President's House in the new capital city, Washington, District of Columbia, where he served in the nation's highest office for two terms. This man is Thomas Jefferson. Born a British subject, he declared independence for a grateful nation and died one of its most revered leaders.

This scene is probably strikingly similar to what an onlooker would have seen on a warm summer evening at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. In his retirement, a constant influx of guests joined him and his family almost every afternoon at table to enjoy good food, good wine, good company, and good conversation. After lingering at the dining table to talk, Jefferson's grandchildren remembered walking the grounds and gardens with their grandfather and his guests. His intimate yet refined sense of entertaining was a hallmark of Jefferson's style. This

style, however, did not begin in his retirement, but developed over a lifetime and changed as circumstance dictated.

Writers have long noted and extensively studied Jefferson's interests in dining, entertaining, wine, cuisine, gardening, farming, philosophy, art, architecture, inventions, and inquiry of all kinds. Just as shelves in libraries struggle to hold the biographies written about Thomas Jefferson, they also struggle to hold the books written about Jefferson's individual interests. The examination of Jefferson's many interests, however, seems incomplete without a study of how they fit together, and there is no better forum for this endeavor than the place in which they melded into a single experience – the dining room. The first book dedicated exclusively to Jefferson's interest in food culture, and how his other interests affected the way he ran his dining, room, kitchen, and plantation, was *Dining at Monticello: 'In Good Taste and Abundance.'* In the introduction, the book's editor Damon Lee Fowler noted that Jefferson's place in American food culture is difficult to “pin down.”² Students of Jefferson tend toward the extremes of popular legend and political history, often neglecting the critical role that food played in Jefferson's life or, when discussing his culinary interests, placing them only in the light of his political achievements.³ The first to write extensively of Jefferson's frequent dinner parties in the President's House was Margaret Bayard Smith in her book entitled, *The First Forty Years of Washington Society.*⁴ Having been a frequent guest in Jefferson's dining room herself, her accounts give some of the most important descriptions of dinner parties hosted by the President and help the modern historian study Jefferson's style of entertaining. The first Jefferson biographer to note the third President's use of his dining room as a political tool, Dumas Malone, argued that Jefferson used dinner parties to increase “good will” in the capital city.⁵ Historians since, including Joanne B. Freeman and Catherine Allgor, have written of

Jefferson's soirees as far more calculated events to influence national politics. Allgor, in *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government*, analyzes Jefferson's well-orchestrated dining atmosphere as an obsessive need for physical control.⁶ Freeman, in *Affairs of Honor*, describes Jefferson's "Epicurean stage management" as a more subtle way to persuade guests through fine wine and as a prop to direct conversation.⁷ Jon Meacham, in the newest biography of Jefferson, *The Art of Power*, building upon the work of historians before him, placed a much greater emphasis on Jefferson's use of entertaining in the President's House than previous biographers.

This emphasis on studying Jefferson's interests individually or focusing simply on Jefferson's use of the dining room in his presidency, leaves the subject open to further investigation. To study a complex man such as Thomas Jefferson, one must study his numerous and seemingly divergent interests in the place in which they coalesced – at his Table. While the work of other historians has proven invaluable to understanding Thomas Jefferson and his individual interests, the memoirs and diaries left by those who dined with Jefferson, especially Margaret Bayard Smith, George Ticknor, Manasseh Culter, and Jefferson's granddaughters, give the most enlightening information about the events that occurred within Jefferson's dining room. The most important and extensively used source of information, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* and *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, coupled with unpublished documents from the Library of Congress and the Massachusetts Historical Society lend Jefferson's voice through his writings. Similarly, published versions of Jefferson's extensive record keeping in his farm, garden, and memorandum books provide details of his daily activities and expenditures. Though Jefferson kept detailed records, his wife Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson and his granddaughter Anne Cary Randolph kept similar records that shed light on the running of

Jefferson's Monticello home both in his youth and his retirement. These records, beginning when Jefferson was a young student and ending days before his death, span his lifetime, showing the longevity of his efforts to create and refine his Table.

Though many historians have focused on Jefferson's use of dining during his presidency, he developed the Table over a lifetime, changing it to fit his current circumstances and never missing an opportunity to learn from experience. Though at times Jefferson used his Table for political means, this practice was not always the case. His love for the Table grew out of the Enlightenment idea that the art of entertaining required an atmosphere dedicated to cuisine and conversation among a company of equals, and this was his primary reason to entertain with the flair that he did. Though he did control this environment, it was not for the sake of control in and of itself. The dining room provided Jefferson with a constant escape from the world and he maintained control of this setting to ensure tranquility in his place of refuge. Long before the pressures of politics made the dining room a corner of retreat for Jefferson, he created there a daily ritual in which to enjoy the simple pleasures of life, something he learned to enjoy as a small child and as a young man studying in Williamsburg.

Entertaining came naturally to Thomas Jefferson. The Jefferson family, as Virginia gentry, introduced its son to cultured dining early in childhood. His experience as a young adult at the table of the Royal Governor and among men of ideas and good taste instilled a sense of the heightened importance of dining. As he began a life of his own at his plantation, Monticello, he began to develop his interest in gardening, and, with the help of his wife, learned to run his household and plantation. Experiments in winemaking, though never achieving even a modicum of success, sparked a love of discovery and an interest in the products of foreign countries. Circumstances, such as the remote location of Monticello and the social upheaval of the

Revolutionary War, prevented Jefferson from entertaining as a young man; however, he would not have to wait long for the opportunity.

When Jefferson accepted the position of Minister Plenipotentiary to the court of King Louis XVI and traveled to France in 1784, he immediately entrenched himself in Parisian culture. At their dinner parties, the Parisian elite introduced Jefferson to their cuisine, their wines and to a certain style of dining that Jefferson continued to emulate for the rest of his life. In Paris he took advantage of the opportunity to organize a household and staff that could compete with the best in the city. He succeeded so thoroughly that even the Marquis de Lafayette decided to use Jefferson's home to host a dinner party that he needed to hold discretely, knowing that the home was up to the standards of Parisian society.

Before leaving for Paris, Jefferson already grew the seeds of a great many foreign plants. Access to the countries of Europe, however, further sparked his desire to learn. Eager to share what he discovered, he sent seeds, plants, and goods home to his friends. He also discovered that his own country had certain products superior to those in Paris, so he sent for such foodstuffs and showcased them at his Table in his Paris home. This "Jeffersonian Exchange" became the center of a lifelong endeavor to spread knowledge and improve the produce of his country, and perhaps more importantly, of his own garden. He continued this exchange when he returned to the United States, procuring the European wines and foodstuffs that he wished to have on his American Table. As the center of this transatlantic exchange, Jefferson became a wealth of knowledge and contact, making his household and Table the best equipped in America.

When Thomas Jefferson returned to the United States and assumed the position of Secretary of State, he wished to persist in the particular table habits he enjoyed in Paris; however, he rarely succeeded. The time between Jefferson's return from France in 1789 and his

inauguration in 1801 was a time of transition for Jefferson. With the exception of a brief time in Philadelphia where he served as Secretary of State and recreated his Paris home and staff, Jefferson felt constantly in motion. He moved with the seat of government to New York and then to Philadelphia, before deciding to retire to Monticello in the last days of 1793. He made what he thought was his final move home in the first days of 1794. The American voters had other ideas, however, and elected him Vice President in 1796, bringing him back to Philadelphia in 1797, and then to the newly constructed District of Columbia in 1800.

When Jefferson became President in 1801, the scene was set for Jefferson to create a Table in the President's House that rivaled anything he created before or after. The President spared no expense to impress his guests with fine food and even better wines, all procured personally by Jefferson in letters written in his own hand. His salary allowed him to employ the staff and construct the atmosphere for dining that he desired to create. Jefferson's dining room allowed him to guide the conversation while making his guests feel at ease in an intimate and refined, yet causal, environment. Jefferson used his Table for political means because his position required it, and the Table became his own personal style of leadership. At the same time, however, the Table offered a refuge from the trials of politics, failure, and disappointment. It was an escape, a comforting ritual in which to enjoy his interests and extensive knowledge, taking even greater pleasure in being able to share them with his guests.

Though Jefferson had tired of politics by the time his second term ended in 1809, he desired to maintain this style of dining atmosphere in his retirement. Though the location of Monticello previously precluded creating the type of Table that Thomas Jefferson desired, circumstances in the retirement years mitigated a few of these problems but created others. A constant stream of educated intellectuals came to stay with the statesman, providing the manner

of dinner table conversation that Jefferson so prized. The Table was the centerpiece of this newly uncomplicated way of life and continued to offer an escape from unpleasant matters. He devoted the rest of his time to his favorite courses of study, correspondence with friends, inquiry about purchases, a continuation of his “Jeffersonian Exchange” of seeds and plants, and most importantly, to perfecting his garden. These activities in turn provided both provisions for the table and fodder for the intellectual conversation that the philosopher and statesman constantly craved. Though his financial situation became more desperate without the presidential salary, he tried to maintain his standards of entertaining as much as possible. Creating a dining experience was an activity that he loved in his youth and he continued to employ throughout his career; it was inconceivable that he would abandon his passions altogether as he grew old.

Thomas Jefferson shaped the Table to showcase his philosophy of entertaining by creating an experience of dining in a space dedicated to an artful display of excellent food and wine enjoyed by a group of equals engaged in enlightened conversation. The Table was a secure and steady constant in Jefferson’s life, offering a refuge from the turmoil of the world around him and a daily ritual to enjoy the interests he labored to cultivate. Though Jefferson changed the function of the Table as circumstance dictated, he always sought to develop expertise in his areas of interest, taking particular delight in sharing his knowledge with his guests.

Chapter II: Foundations

[T]o the habitual conversations on these occasions I owed much instruction:¹

- Thomas Jefferson, *Autobiography*

Thomas Jefferson spent a lifetime developing his Table. The foundation for his interests in entertaining, dinner table conversation, study, gardening, viticulture, organizing a home to host guests, came with the experiences and opportunities afforded him in his early life. From his birth in 1743 until he left to serve as Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of Louis XVI in 1784, the young statesman served as an “apprentice,” receiving instruction from his mentors and experimenting in his interests. His family home at Shadwell and his mentors at the College of William and Mary exposed Jefferson to ideas of hospitality and cultured dining. He designed his plantation home, Monticello, around his interests in farming and gardening, and he designed the house and grounds to entertain guests, while he and his wife learned to run their household. Circumstances in America at the time, however, prevented Jefferson from putting his ideas into practice at his own Table, but they did not stifle his enthusiasm for his newfound interests, especially his love of wine.

In many respects, Jefferson’s early life proves most difficult to study. Records are scant for this era, due to his young age, a fire that destroyed almost everything he owned, and his own destruction of personal documents. A fire at Jefferson’s family home at Shadwell destroyed almost all of his records before 1770. It is unclear how some of the scant records, such as Jefferson’s early memoranda books and his mother’s inventories and family Bible, escaped the fire. They may have been saved by servants or were perhaps stored at another location at the time. In addition to this accidental destruction of material, it also appears that Jefferson destroyed his correspondence with his wife after her death in 1783. While some historians

believe that he burned personal letters to protect their privacy, other scholars believe that Jefferson burned them in the anguish of his wife's death.² According to the editors of *The Jefferson Papers*, he only ever destroyed letters from Martha, and perhaps his mother, and never alludes to having done so.³ The copious records that do survive from Jefferson's young adulthood, mostly account and memoranda books kept by Thomas Jefferson and his wife Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson, paint a picture of Jefferson's interests and consumption patterns long before he went to France. Other documents, such as Jefferson's autobiography and letters, explain the experiences that influenced how he developed his own theories of hospitality and culinary ideas. Though Jefferson kept tireless records of his expenses and activities throughout his life, some of the earliest records from which the historian can begin to understand him and his Table are not his own; they are those of his parents who lived on a hill in a prestigious plantation home called Shadwell.

Born the eldest son to Peter and Jane Jefferson on April 13, 1743, Thomas Jefferson spent his early years living on his father's successful plantation at Shadwell. Thomas Jefferson's father, Peter Jefferson, was an important and influential man in Virginia and became a successful planter. His achievements in farming made him financially stable, something that Thomas Jefferson strove for but never attained.⁴ Thomas's mother, Jane Jefferson, fulfilled her duties as mistress of Shadwell with the grace worthy of the wife of an important man in the colony. She taught her son by example, showing him how the mistress of a Virginia plantation ran a household and entertained in a manner expected of a prosperous, cultured family. According to Jefferson's great-granddaughter, Sarah N. Randolph, a public highway passed by the hilltop plantation home.⁵ In an era where travelers often found themselves at the mercy of homes along the road for food and shelter, as few inns existed, the Jeffersons opened Shadwell to guests in the

spirit of Virginia hospitality.⁶ Homes were for entertaining, not domesticity, and built and furnished as much for show as for comfort.⁷ Virginians in the eighteenth century lived in the almost constant presence of their slaves or visitors, and Shadwell was no exception.

Thomas Jefferson acquired his penchant for record keeping from his mother, who kept inventories of household items. These lists, along with archeological pursuits at the old plantation, help historians construct what family life would have been like for the young Thomas.⁸ The Jefferson family had a home suitable for entertaining large numbers of people. The main room could seat twenty for dinner, accommodating each with knives, forks, spoons and napkins, at a time when people usually used a spoon or perhaps their hands.⁹ The family purchased silver-plated and glazed stoneware dishes, and Jane Jefferson served her guests coffee, tea, or punch, each in their respective services designed specifically for the drink of choice.¹⁰ The main house also served as the storage space for the most expensive culinary items, probably kept under lock and key by the mistress of the household, including sugar, coffee, a “pepperbox,” spice mortar, and other seasonings.¹¹ Slaves, however, cooked in a kitchen separate from the main house. Based upon their kitchen instruments and serving dishes, such as chafing dishes noted in Jane Jefferson’s inventories, cooks produced an elevated style of cooking that took cuisine from a necessity to more of an art form.¹²

The table present in the Shadwell dining room shows the level of refined dining that the Jefferson family enjoyed. Peter Jefferson specified that the table he ordered from a furniture maker in 1750 have rounded edges.¹³ This convention of the French style created a more intimate environment for dining and facilitated the exchange of ideas through polite conversation among the whole group of diners. By the middle of the seventeenth century, fashionable Parisians exchanged their long trestle tables for tables that facilitated a circular seating pattern,

and the practice had spread to other countries.¹⁴ Thomas Jefferson continued to dine in this manner for the remainder of this life. The style felt familiar to him, and thus comfortable. Though he first experienced this style as a child, he came to better understand its importance when he first went to Williamsburg as a young student at William and Mary.

Thomas Jefferson's experience in Williamsburg cemented his philosophy of the Table as an experience of dining created by a host to share with his guests, creating a convivial environment of conversation augmented by an array of good foods and wines. By the age of seventeen he met the requirements for entrance to the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg.¹⁵ During his course of study at this Virginia institution, he became the protégé of many influential men in the colony's capital who embraced the bright and talented boy caught in the prime of his intellectual pursuits. Dr. William Small, his professor at William and Mary, introduced him to the literature of many important Enlightenment thinkers, including Immanuel Kant.¹⁶ These authors offered Jefferson many ideas that informed his thinking as both a statesman and an intellectual. As Dr. Small shaped his mind, another honed his professional skills, giving him a career as a lawyer; George Wythe bestowed perhaps the greatest influence upon the young Jefferson. Jefferson later noted in his autobiography that Wythe became his "faithful and beloved mentor in youth" and his "most affectionate friend through life."¹⁷ Before taking Thomas as an apprentice and introducing him to "the practice of the law," Wythe made an equally important introduction;¹⁸ he presented the young scholar to the Royal Governor of the Virginia Colony, Francis Fauquier.¹⁹

A man of the Enlightenment, Fauquier desired his lavish table to serve as a center of conversation, an inner circle in which Jefferson found himself a frequent guest.²⁰ The experience of dining with the most accomplished and powerful men in the colony most certainly had an

effect on the teenager.²¹ Years later, in his autobiography Jefferson wrote that “with him [Fauquier], and at his table, Dr. Small and Mr. Wythe, his *amici omnium horarum*, and myself formed a *partie quarree*, and to the habitual conversations on these occasions I owed much instruction.”²² This reference to an experience at table appears to be the earliest recorded by Jefferson, and it left a profound impact on the avid scholar. If he had not previously seen a meal as the opportunity to exchange ideas as well as the sharing of food, he certainly understood its importance acutely at the Governor’s table. This model of conversation over a long dinner with an intimate group of intellectuals seems to be the model that Jefferson pursued as the ideal dinner party for the remainder of his life.

Though Jefferson presided over the same table in the Governor’s mansion when Jefferson took the post of Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1779, a serendipitous privilege and one probably not lost on him, the Revolutionary War hampered his ability to entertain as his mentor had. Based upon the inventory of the furniture in the Governor’s Palace in 1779, Jefferson could have entertained on a grand scale. Not only did the pantry hold flatware for forty, the numerous tables and chairs could have certainly accommodated a large number to dine.²³ In wartime, however, shortages, interrupted trade operations, and imminent danger of attack, prohibited Jefferson from entertaining regularly as governor. This was the first of many experiences when circumstances beyond his control hindered Jefferson from creating an atmosphere of lavish abundance and intellectual conversation with guests that he so enjoyed.

Thomas Jefferson tried to recreate this atmosphere when he designed his own home at Monticello. In his memorandum books, small notebooks that Jefferson always carried with him, he recorded, in 1769, the beginnings of a flatware and silverware set to feed a dozen people.²⁴ This was the beginning of Jefferson’s efforts to design a house that fostered entertaining as an art

to be practiced. Though his family and the great men of Williamsburg imparted their knowledge to Jefferson, he still had much to learn about how he wanted to design his Table, organize his home around this idea, and cultivate the interests that he intended to showcase at the meals he hosted. During this time he learned to run his own plantation, began his legendary garden, cultivated an early interest in wine, and dabbled in agricultural experiments. In this period of his life, however, he also married his wife Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson on New Year's Day, 1772. This inaugurated the happiest decade of Jefferson's life and what Jefferson and Martha built, they built together. Thus, the Table and affairs of the household in this era can be seen to be Martha's as much as Thomas', and it is Martha's records, rather than her husband's, that give the best picture of the elements of the early Monticello Table.

Thomas Jefferson designed Monticello to be his refuge and retreat for cultivating his private interests, especially study, gardening, and agriculture. During the early construction of Monticello, his "little mountain," he lived in a small, one-room outbuilding.²⁵ The Master of Monticello began to build his version of a Palladian villa before marrying Martha, but it was incomplete when they wed. The couple lived in a home constantly under construction for the entirety of their ten-year marriage.²⁶ The workmen, however, completed the dining room first.²⁷ This clearly was no accident, as Jefferson would have considered the room indispensable.

By all accounts, Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson was a woman of grace and intelligence, and well educated for her time. During their ten year marriage, Jefferson's attentions were consumed with the affairs of the colonies and the then fledgling nation, and this left his wife to care for affairs at home. Martha ran the household as her husband later did, with great care and attention to detail, and she shared in his experimentations and love of the products of the plantation and kitchen. She noted making an experiment with coffee on November 25,

1772 and, as her husband would have done in his garden book, wrote when they first ate a dish of fresh peas in June 1774.²⁸ Her accounts also show the earliest surviving recipe for the Jefferson Table, “to make a cream cheese by mrs Adams.”²⁹ Her lists of accounts, scattered among Thomas’s other accounts and legal notes, define her role in the preparation of items for household consumption.

Though Martha ran the household effectively, one woman helped her perhaps more than any other. Ursula Granger, an enslaved woman in her late teens or early twenties, had as much responsibility for the household affairs as her mistress.³⁰ According to Ursula’s son, Isaac Granger, his mother was the laundry woman and pastry chef at Monticello.³¹ He recalled Martha Jefferson walking down to the kitchen with a cookbook to read his mother instructions for baking cakes and other sweets.³² Ursula also had a great hand in smoking and preserving meat and, according to Thomas Jefferson, was the only one trusted to bottle the annual batch of cider.³³ Aside from cider, Martha Jefferson also oversaw the brewing of beer for the house, as much as fifteen gallons at a time.³⁴ To aid her in these endeavors, the Monticello library, according to Jefferson’s 1783 Catalog of Books, contained volumes that instructed in the art of brewing, distilling, and winemaking.³⁵

These activities followed the conventions of the day, as did the food consumed at the plantation. Martha recorded the opening of barrels of flour regularly, implying that they used wheat as a staple. Most Virginians ate corn as the staple of their diets, but some of the gentry used flour,³⁶ as the elites in Europe would have done at the time. Along with either starch, all Virginians consumed a more varied diet than their European contemporaries, dining on an abundance of meat, game, fish, vegetables, and fruit.³⁷ This appears to be no exception in the Jefferson household. In addition to the vegetables from the garden, Martha’s account books note

the purchase of dozens of chickens at a time from slaves on the plantation, including Ursula, and the slaughter of up to twenty-five hogs, cattle, and geese at a time, specifically for household consumption. The practice of purchasing foodstuffs from slaves became commonplace at Monticello, even into the 1820s. Slaves probably cultivated some vegetables and cared for their own livestock in the hopes that they could sell them to their masters or to supplement what food the Jeffersons gave them. This food often included cuts of meat, usually ham or salt pork. In 1777, Martha noted that twenty-eight hams and twenty-one shoulders were saved for the house, while forty hams and fifty shoulders were packed up for the workmen.³⁸ The quantities of food preserved for the family's consumption suggest that guests often dined with them, as the amounts would have been excessive for the needs of such a small family consisting of Martha, Thomas, and their young children.

While Martha Jefferson was responsible for many of the products that appeared on the Monticello Table, the fruits and vegetables that came from the garden were Thomas Jefferson's own endeavor and particular enjoyment. Jefferson prized his garden and orchard, and he kept and maintained his Garden Book, a ledger of the trees and seeds planted and produce harvested, for the rest of his life. Jefferson consistently recorded when he planted his favorite vegetable, peas, and when each crop planted arrived at table. The young philosopher ordered that peas be planted every few weeks in the spring so that peas could appear at table in June and continue throughout the summer. He also cultivated different varieties of peas, as he did with many other plants, making sure to note when he sowed and harvested each. He began harvesting fruit at Monticello in 1772, probably from trees planted in 1769, and from that time on, the abundance and variety supplied by his garden increased significantly.³⁹ Newtown Pippin apples, planted at

Monticello in 1773, became his favorite, and he sang their praises while in France, unable to find anything of suitable similarity while abroad.⁴⁰

Though these records show that the rows of produce held far fewer species and varieties than in later years, by the 1770s, Jefferson already began his love of experimenting with different types of produce and gathering grafts and seeds from as many sources as possible. Peter Hatch, the Director of Gardens and Grounds at Monticello from 1977 to 2013, called Jefferson's garden, an "Ellis Island" of plants and species. By the 1770s, Jefferson already started a series of correspondence with friends to find the most exotic plants and foodstuffs to grow and share at his table. The first surviving reference in his correspondence to this interest comes from his mentor George Wythe in 1770, saying that he had sent nectarine and apricot grafts, as well as grapevines.⁴¹ In 1774, Jefferson began to experiment with foreign seeds he received from Italy. His records show that he planted "*Radicchio di Pistoia, Aglio di Toscana* (Tuscan garlic), Filbert (hazelnuts), wild endive, *cipolle bianche* (white onions), Spanish onion, Savoys, Salsafia, *Carote di Pisa* (carrots from Pisa), and *Meliache e Albicocche*," which, Jefferson noted, were two different types of apricots.⁴² His switch to writing in Italian, which he rarely did before or after, coincides quite unsurprisingly with the arrival at Monticello of an Italian named Philip Mazzei, who in addition to giving Jefferson foreign seeds for his garden, involved Jefferson in a business venture equally as suited to the gardener's interests.

Philip Mazzei, a Tuscan by birth, studied medicine and lived for a time in Turkey and London. In London, he became an acquaintance of a Virginia merchant named Thomas Adams. Mazzei wanted to begin a business venture in the New World, and Adams proved to be the perfect connection. An adventurous experimenter like Jefferson, Mazzei had, by 1771 devised a plan to bring more than 10,000 vines, olive trees, and other plants to Virginia from France, Italy

and Spain, along with at least fifty peasants to cultivate the land.⁴³ The numerous arrangements necessary for the venture included getting permission from the Grand Duke of Tuscany to export the vines.⁴⁴ In 1773, Mazzei and ten Tuscan vine cultivators arrived in the colony of Virginia. Thomas Adams accompanied Mazzei in his travels to find unsettled land, and they stopped for a visit with Adam's acquaintance Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson, intrigued by Mazzei's proposition, gave the Tuscan 2,000 acres of his own property near his Monticello home. There, Mazzei built an estate home he gave the name Colle, meaning hill in Italian, to fit perfectly with the theme of Jefferson's Monticello, meaning little mountain.⁴⁵ Jefferson, as a well-know lawyer, probably helped create the contract for Mazzei's "Company or Partnership, for the Purpose of raising and making Wine, Oil, agruminous Plants and Silk."⁴⁶ Investors bought shares for £50 sterling. George Washington owned one share, as did Thomas Jefferson.⁴⁷ Mazzei did not plant until the summer of 1775 for various reasons, including weather and delayed shipments of supplies. There is no evidence that he ever produced a vintage and the Revolutionary War forced the end of his experiment.⁴⁸ Though Mazzei's endeavor never produced results, not even national affairs could stifle Jefferson's drive to experiment.

Around the time of Mazzei's arrival and foray into American viniculture, Jefferson's interest in wine and consumption patterns changed significantly. Records from prior years show that the beverages served at Monticello differed little from those served at other homes of the Virginia gentry, who generally consumed beer, cider, and Madeira.⁴⁹ His first cellar list in 1769 contained cider, Lisbon wine, Madeira, and three different vintages of Port; he also purchased brandy in the same year.⁵⁰ A 1771 record includes Port and Madeira, and a 1772 cellar inventory seems much the same, save the addition of rum.⁵¹ Rum and European wines were considered popular luxuries at this time, but not out of the ordinary for the upper classes.⁵² His mentors

most likely introduced these indulgences to him at a young age. For example, he noted in one of his memoranda books that, “Mrs. [George] Wythe puts 1/10 very rich superfine Malmsey to a dry Madeira and makes a very fine wine.”⁵³ Though Jefferson, before becoming a delegate to the Continental Congress, made relatively small orders in comparison to his later investments in fine beverages, he clearly utilized his cellar in his early years at Monticello.

Jefferson’s appointment as a delegate to the Continental Congress in 1775 helped expand his exposure to new wines and put him in contact with merchants dealing in foreign imports. He expanded his circle of acquaintances, included Philadelphia wine merchant Henry Hill who subsequently invited Jefferson to dine with him at his country home.⁵⁴

Quantities of wine ordered for Jefferson’s household began to increase in 1776. This means that he either began to entertain more, or he learned the value of laying down a cellar to age his young wines until they matured. These purchases included a pipe of Madeira, or about 475 liters of wine.⁵⁵ Purchases of spirits such as rum and brandy also increased.⁵⁶ Though not extravagant purchases, the Virginian remained cognizant of vintage and value. In 1775, trying to ensure he did not overpay for Madeira and Syracuse, a *vin de liqueur* from Sicily, he calculated the cost of each:

If a pipe of Madeira yeilds [sic] 30 doz. Bottles, we drink it at 7. years old for 3/ a bottle, which includes the 7 years interest. Such a bottle holds 15 common wine glasses. A flask of Syracuse holds about $7\frac{3}{4}$ common wine glasses call them $7\frac{1}{2}$ because of the extraordinary sediment. To drink it then as cheap as the best Madeira it should be 18d. currey. the flask. To be as cheap as new Madeira it should be but 10d the flask, or £6-0 the gross.⁵⁷

This calculation shows not only Jefferson’s care in financing his wine purchases, but also his interests in new wines, such as Syracuse, and his endeavor to fit them into the existing system of cost that he understood.

While his travels to Philadelphia as a delegate to the Continental Congress helped shape his interest in wine, his work and time away from home meant that he could not devote as much care as he would have liked to his other interests. He could not entertain in Philadelphia, as he had no house, living usually in boarding houses and taking his meals there or in taverns with other delegates. When he was at Monticello, however, the ability to entertain was hampered by the location of the home. At the time, the estate was far removed from towns and cities, and many of his friends, especially those he made in Philadelphia and Williamsburg, did not live nearby. To create an atmosphere for enjoyable dining and enlightened conversation, such dining companions were as essential as excellent wine, well-prepared food, and a comfortable dining room. For the correct combination of circumstances, Jefferson would have to wait another few years until his arrival in Paris, where he wholeheartedly threw himself into Parisian society. To take part in this social scene, however, Jefferson needed to use what he had learned as a boy and as a young scholar. He had already learned to appreciate entertaining as a form of art and dining as a pastime that he enjoyed with great relish, though the circumstances in America left him little opportunity to put what he had learned into practice. He had, however, built a life for himself at Monticello, created a refuge in which to study his greatest interests, and designed a house fit for entertaining in the future. From the records of his early endeavors, it is clear that he developed his philosophy of the Table early and that the interests he developed in these years, especially study, conversation, gardening, and viniculture, laid the foundation for the evolution of his theory when granted the experience and opportunities of France, all of which he was poised and primed to undertake.

Chapter III: An Apprentice in Paris

This is the richest country I have ever beheld. . . . Hitherto I have derived as much satisfaction and delight from my journey as I could propose to myself.¹

- Thomas Jefferson to William Short, Lyons, March 15, 1787

The richness of Europe captivated Thomas Jefferson before he even left American soil. He educated himself from a body of literature steeped in Old World and Enlightenment thought and could not contain his enthusiasm to finally see the cities that produced the great philosophers he studied from his childhood. Jefferson loved France, its people, and all they produced; he wrote to a friend that,

In the pleasures of the table they are far before us, because with good taste they unite temperance. . . . Were I to proceed to tell you how much I enjoy their architecture, sculpture, painting, music, I should want words. It is in these arts they shine.²

Europe catered to the sensibilities of good taste, culture, and sophistication that Jefferson craved as a cosmopolitan, a man of the Enlightenment. The aspiring philosopher grasped at every opportunity for new experience during the five years that he served his country at the Court of Louis XVI. When Jefferson arrived in Europe, he was still an apprentice in his interests and in the skill of entertaining. When he left, he left as a master, having perfected his skill to such an extent that the Marquis de Lafayette, a hero of the American Revolution, but also one of France's most important statesmen at the time, chose Jefferson's dining room for an historic dinner of great political consequence in Paris. Paris presented Jefferson the opportunity to further his study of the Table and engage in his interests in wine, food, and enlightened conversation. He learned through experience at the tables of Paris' elites and put what he learned into practice, taking advantage of an opportunity to organize a household and train staff for the purpose of entertaining on a grand scale comparable to that of his contemporaries.

Thomas Jefferson left the New World for the Old in 1784. Congress had asked Jefferson to serve abroad previously, but he had declined the offer, citing his wife Martha's precarious health. In 1782, however, after the birth of her sixth child in ten years, Martha Jefferson's health, always somewhat frail, failed, and her death in September devastated Thomas Jefferson. When Congress repeated its offer, Jefferson accepted. France offered an escape from his sorrow in Virginia, and time had come to see a world beyond the colonies. He did not, however, intend to travel alone. His eldest daughter, Martha, called Patsy, accompanied him in 1784, while daughter Maria, called Polly, eventually joined them in ensuing years. The girls served as moral support and comfort for their father, while William Short served as Jefferson's private secretary.³ Short, a lawyer and graduate of William and Mary, was distantly related to Jefferson by marriage and Jefferson considered Short his adopted son. Two unofficial members of the Jefferson household also accompanied the party. Sally Hemings, whose relationship with Jefferson has made her as famous as her master, then a child herself, accompanied Polly when she traveled to Europe. Her older brother James Hemings traveled with Jefferson to Paris to be trained in the art of French cuisine. It was this small party that accompanied the new American Minister Plenipotentiary at his posting to the Court of King Louis XVI and helped him in his endeavors.

Jefferson's official duties in Paris thrust him directly into his apprenticeship of the Table upon his arrival. One of his first invitations was to dine at Benjamin Franklin's home. Franklin had a reputation for lavish entertaining that rivaled any American of the era, and his parties included fine wines. At that first dinner, the white wine from southeastern France made a particular impression on the newly arrived envoy to Paris, so much so that Jefferson ordered from John Bondfield a gross, twelve dozen bottles, of the wine "from Dr. F's."⁴ Bondfield, a merchant from Bordeaux, procured wines for Jefferson throughout his five-year appointment in

France. The size of these wine orders increased significantly over the first few years. Requests for more than a hundred bottles of wine or multiple casks of brandy became commonplace.⁵ For example, soon after his arrival, he bought two casks of brandy containing forty-two gallons each. He asked Bondfield for six dozen bottles of red and six dozen bottles of white on one occasion and for twelve dozen bottles of claret, a light red wine, and twelve dozen bottles of “*Vin de grave*,” a wine from Bordeaux, on another.⁶ Jefferson, as a connoisseur of fine wines, often noted which wines he liked and those he did not. In a letter back to Bondfield, he declared the claret “excellent,” but the *grave* “a little hard.”⁷ The exposure to the wines he had access to in France widened his perspective on vintages and the subtle differences among wines from different regions. Though he found favorite wines, he ordered a great number of different wines in great quantities, laying down a varied cellar in his Paris home. As transportation from the south of France cost far less than imports across the Atlantic, he took advantage of the opportunity to indulge in his interest and showcase his superiority in finding and procuring good wines when he entertained guests at his Paris Table. To entertain, however, he needed to first find a house, train a staff, and procure the necessary housewares to emulate the style of entertaining he found in the Paris homes of his friends.

Finding the perfect home, however, presented Jefferson with immense difficulty. In fact, it took him more than a year to settle. When he first arrived, he lived on the rue de Richelieu, and then the Hôtel d’Orléans.⁸ The next year, he found a home to his liking, Hôtel de Langeac on the corner of the Champs-Élysées and the rue de Berri.⁹ The house usually had a staff of seven or eight, commanded by an able *maître d’hôtel*.¹⁰ His first *maître d’* had the name of Marc and few records concerning him exist. The second, Adrien Petit, took over in 1786 and later served Jefferson in Philadelphia when Jefferson was Secretary of State.¹¹ In his memorandum

books, Jefferson chose to calculate which of the *maître d'hôtel* spent the least in the running of the household.¹² By his figures, Petit spent twenty percent less in kitchen expenses. The kitchen, however, was under the control of a *cuisiniere* (cook), whom he hired in 1785, but he never intended for her to serve for any length of time.¹³ Before he even left America, he set a plan into motion to ensure that he would enjoy the cuisine of Paris when he eventually returned to Virginia. He had decided to bring one of his slaves with him to France to master the art of French cooking and serve both abroad and at home.

In May of 1784, Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter to William Short, both asking Short to serve as his private secretary in Paris and enlisting Short's help in bringing James Hemings with them:

I propose for a particular purpose to carry my servant Jame [James Hemings]. . . . If you conclude to join me I would wish you to order Jame to join and attend without a moment's delay. If you decline the trop [sic], be so good as to direct that he shall immediately come on to me at Philadelphia.¹⁴

Though his letter does not explain his "particular purpose," Jefferson intended to take the enslaved teenager to France to have him trained in the art of French cooking. For Jefferson, James would have been a logical choice for the task. The young James and all his siblings were favorites of Jefferson, and for good reason.¹⁵ It was an unacknowledged fact that they were indeed more than slaves, but family as well. The boys' mother, Betty Hemings belonged to Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson's father, John Wayles. John Wayles had a long relationship with Betty Hemings that produced six children, including James and Sally.¹⁶ When John Wayles died, Martha inherited them all and brought them to Monticello. There is little doubt that the Jeffersons and Hemings were cognizant of the relationship.¹⁷ This circumstance made James a logical choice to receive advanced training and higher status, but it also complicated the situation, as he was both Jefferson's slave and his late wife's half brother.

James would have found Paris a liberating scene. In France, he was technically no longer enslaved, but Jefferson also should never have brought him into the country as a 1777 law prohibited the entrance of anyone of African descent.¹⁸ While technically free, he also found himself in a foreign country where he did not initially speak the language, though he became quite fluent by the end of his studies. The skills he learned, however, gave him immense bargaining power when he returned to the United States with Jefferson in 1789.

The development of James Hemings' skills began promptly upon his arrival in France. His first instructor, Jefferson's *traiteur* (caterer) Combeaux, taught him until 1786.¹⁹ Jefferson also paid for James to serve as an apprentice to a pastry chef.²⁰ His third, and perhaps most important instructor was the cook for the Prince de Conde, Louis-Joseph de Bourbon. The Prince, in both his Paris home and his country estate called Chantilly, had a reputation for maintaining a kitchen that produced magnificent food.²¹ During the prince's absence, the cook took James as a pupil. However, Hemings made the monetary arrangement without Jefferson's permission. The chef instructed James for one day in Paris, five days at the country estate, and another four days in Paris after their return. The price for such instruction was exorbitant, but it is doubtful that Jefferson begrudged the cost; in terms of furthering his culinary interests, training James was invaluable.²² The Prince de Conde's cook had the reputation of being one of the best in Paris. Jefferson's servant had learned from the best, a fact to boast of at table, and once Jefferson returned home, he would have one of the best-trained chefs on the continent.

A magnificent chef, however, cannot perform his art without the proper tools. Intent on entertaining on a lavish scale, as would have been expected of him, Jefferson had to obtain all of the necessities for a kitchen and house as quickly as possible. Upon his arrival in Paris, Jefferson started buying. Though books took a great deal of his expendable income, he frequently bought

items to adorn his table or for use in his kitchen. His memoranda books often show purchases of kitchen utensils or reimbursements to his *maître d'* for such purchases.²³ One of his orders upon his arrival was household linen, furniture, dozens of silver utensils, and cups and saucers.²⁴ He began modestly with a dozen place settings and serving dishes in the same pattern.²⁵ On another occasion he purchased three-dozen knives with ivory handles and three-dozen red china plates, enough for a service for a three-course meal with his usual ten to twelve guests.²⁶ Sometimes, however, his spending became frivolous to satisfy his own interests; he designed a coffee pot to his exact specifications and had it cast in silver.²⁷ His sense that no expense be spared for a perfect table, however, took its toll on his finances, and he had to reduce his budget, cutting his beloved book and wine expenses in half.²⁸ Though his meticulous record keeping system led him to record every purchase, he seems to have disregarded the idea of keeping to the budget he often set for himself.

Jefferson's memorandum books detailed not only his purchases, but his consumption patterns as well. Though no guests appear to have recorded the food served at Jefferson's Paris home, he himself gave a detailed list of his breakfast menu. He calculated the cost of three months of breakfasts for those living at Hôtel de Langeac. The meal in the Jefferson home of bread, butter, cream, sugar, and tea was also a typical breakfast for his Parisian contemporaries.²⁹ Though at Monticello Jefferson enjoyed a slightly larger breakfast characteristic of the Virginia gentry, as a minister in a foreign country, he observed the conventions that Parisian elites observed.

Thomas Jefferson designed his Paris home to provide Parisian cosmopolitans with an atmosphere and style of dining familiar to them. Jefferson, himself a student of Governor Fauquier's table, was already well accustomed to the French style. In the Enlightenment,

Parisians began dining in a circular seating pattern around a circular or similarly shaped table. Diners sat shoulder to shoulder and men and women sat next to each other in alternating chairs.³⁰ This seating system fostered an environment devoid of hierarchy that prized discussion among equals.³¹ Discussion could only be frank, however, in a private atmosphere. The circular seating pattern facilitated this feeling of intimacy, because it could reduce the need for servants who might overhear conversations. Instead of having servants wait on the diners, the fashionable Parisians had the serving dishes placed on the table in a geometrical pattern, a style of service known as *service à la française*.³² Each recipe had its own serving dish and those who partook could serve themselves from the plates nearest them. To further reduce the need for servants in his dining room, Jefferson also adopted the French fashion of placing individual serving tables, called dumbwaiters, between the guests at table to hold clean flatware and silverware.³³

In adopting these fashions, Jefferson's style became fully entrenched in the French convention of "dining without ceremony," an intensely private atmosphere that encouraged the free flow of conversation and ideas. Dining without ceremony, however, did not mean dining without luxury; excellent food and wines were a hallmark of this style, as the connoisseurs who surrounded such a table trained their palates as carefully as they trained their minds. It was in this atmosphere that Jefferson flourished. It became an ideal setting for his personality, skills, and interests. Thomas Jefferson used his Table as a space in which he showcased his prowess as an intellectual, discussed his interests, and demonstrated his superiority in cultivating them. In Paris, Jefferson developed his Table into a space dedicated to an artful display of excellent food and wine enjoyed by a group of equals engaged in enlightened conversation.

Jefferson's efforts to create a Table fit for high entertaining in Paris did not go unnoticed. The best explanation of the style of dining comes from a letter that Abigail Adams wrote to her niece, Lucy Cranch, describing dinner at Thomas Jefferson's home in Paris:

At dinner, the ladies and gentlemen are mixed, and you converse with him who sits next to you, rarely speaking to persons across the table, unless to ask if they will be served with any thing from your side. Conversation is never general, as with us; for, when the company quit the table, they fall in tête-a-tête of two and two, when the conversation is in a low voice, and a stranger, unacquainted with the customs of the country, would think that everybody had private business to transact.³⁴

Though to Abigail Adams, this style seemed unfamiliar, Jefferson's dining room atmosphere functioned much like that of his Parisian contemporaries. Diners served themselves and each other, men and women were mixed, and participated in conversation of a refined and educated manner.

Jefferson embraced the chance to hold dinner parties such as the affair described by Abigail Adams. It was an opportunity that neither his home in Monticello nor his public offices had ever afforded. Monticello was too far removed from genteel city life to warrant the type of grand dinner parties that Paris encouraged. The Table required more than just elevated cuisine and excellent wine. The right company was also crucial to creating a dining atmosphere of refinement and Enlightenment ideals.

As much as Jefferson loved Paris, it was there that he started to find two divergent aspects of his personality emerge. He often battled between a desire for society and a desire for solitude to engage in his interests, notably gardening and study. The Table emerged as the forum in which he could reconcile these two divergent desires by using the table as a space to engage in society while finding refuge in his interests. At times, however, Jefferson simply required escape.

In February, 1787, Thomas Jefferson quit Paris for a personal trip into the South of France and Northern Italy, leaving William Short and Adrien Petit to care for his affairs in the city. Despite his constant correspondence, he intended the journey to be a personal one. “Architecture, painting, sculpture, antiquities, agriculture, the condition of the laboring poor fill all my moments,” he wrote to Short.³⁵ He did not visit these places, however, in an official capacity. In fact, he desired to travel inconspicuously and for personal edification. Instead of bringing his own servants with him as he normally did, he told Short that,

The plan of having servants who know nothing of me, places me perfectly at ease. I intend to have taken a new one at every principal city, to have carried him on to serve me on the road to the next and there changed him.³⁶

Jefferson did not want his own notoriety to ruin his journey. In fact, he shunned society on this trip. He told his old friend Philip Mazzei that meeting “well-informed gardeners” should be “among the most precious acquaintances” he expected to make while away from Paris:

From men of that class I have derived the most satisfactory information in the course of my journey and have sought their acquaintance with as much industry as I have avoided that of others who would have made me waste my time on good dinners and good society. For those objects one need not leave Paris.³⁷

Though he could find polite society in Paris, of which he clearly tired after a time, there were experiences he could not capture within the city. The most important delight of the trip, visiting the vineyards and cellars of the great vintners, thrilled the connoisseur of wine. He arranged his trip to travel through the best regions, placing a particular emphasis on Bordeaux and Burgundy. “This is the richest country I have ever beheld,” he wrote to Short during his travels.³⁸ The foods and wines he discovered made their way to his American table, while his experiences became his favorite topic of conversation for years to follow.

Jefferson constantly observed the world around him. He consciously noted the culture and climate of Southern France because it resembled that of the states south of Virginia,³⁹ and he

desired to speculate how plants from the Old World would fare in the New. His notes, as well as his correspondence from this trip, contain numerous observations about the types of soil and what grew best in each place. He also commented on the methods of cultivation, being particularly intrigued by the practice of having multiple plants in the same field, such as alternating vines, corn, and trees.⁴⁰ Not only did the plants draw his interest, but he was fascinated by the people cultivating them. He noted the labor of the peasant farmers and their diet, which consisted of little meat but cheese, eggs, potatoes, and other vegetables to accompany their bread.⁴¹ This was not unlike the diet that Jefferson himself ate later in life.

This trip also brought him into contact with the source of some of his favorite food and drink which he continued to eat throughout his life, importing large quantities to the United States. When in Lombardy he had the privilege of watching artisans make Parmesan cheese in Rozzano. He intensely recorded every detail, from the number of gallons of milk the cows produced to the use of saffron to give the cheese its color, probably hoping that he could replicate the process at home.⁴² He also noted the way in which these artisans also made butter and mascarpone cheese, another of his favorites.

Jefferson's sojourn through the South of France and the regions of Lombardy and Piedmont gave him invaluable firsthand experience into the origins of the wines he loved, the new foods that he continued to import to the United States for the rest of his life, and the land he had read of but never seen. He incorporated many of these elements into this Table, especially the wines and foods, which always served as novelties to the guests to whom Jefferson served these items, such as Parmesan cheese, in the United States. They sparked the curiosity of these guests, and Jefferson, who never tired of recounting the tales of his experience, would explain their origins. Thus, what he learned not only translated to the items on the Table but the

conversation that surrounded it. The trip, though brief, served as a source of knowledge for the rest of his life.

To those places he could not travel, friends with similar interests became his eyes, and passed similar knowledge to him. Jefferson's friend and secretary, Williams Short, seemed to understand those details that would have interested his employer. While Jefferson worked in Paris, Short took a journey to places in the Apennine peninsula that Jefferson had only dreamed of seeing himself. Short wrote about the products of the land and the cities that he visited, and spent part of this journey fulfilling Jefferson's requests for items he could not procure in Paris. When in Naples, Short bought one of the most famous machines that Thomas Jefferson brought back from Europe, advising that,

I procured at Naples according to your request the mould [sic] for making maccaroni [sic]. It is of a small diameter than is used in the manufactories of Maccaroni, but of the same diameter with others that had been sent to gentleman in other countries. I went to see the maccaroni made. The machinery for pressing as used at Naples is enormous, much more so than I had expected.⁴³

Upon receipt of this machine from Short, Jefferson set out to study it. He made a drawing of the piece, explaining in great detail the way in which it made the pasta that he so greatly enjoyed.⁴⁴

The manuscript also included a recipe for making the pasta itself. The recipe, however, shows Jefferson's lack of knowledge about cooking. He noted the ingredients, but none of the proportions, except that pasta had less yeast than bread. He did explain, however, that the best macaroni in Italy was made with a "particular sort of flour called Semola," probably semolina flour, a coarse flour made from the hard durum wheat that grew in Southern Italy.⁴⁵

The stark contrast between his meticulous notes on the machine and the unspecific recipe shows Jefferson's true interests. He had sophisticated taste, but as a gentleman, the details of cooking were left to those employed for the task.

Jefferson took an interest in recording the recipes of other dishes that he found interesting or that he wanted to replicate again. His motives for doing so are not entirely clear. He may have enjoyed them while away from his Paris home and recorded them so that James Hemings, who was probably literate at the time, could make them himself. Though the documents are undated, historians seem to agree they returned from France with Jefferson; all are in his own hand, but he switched between French and English.⁴⁶ Besides the “maccaroni” [sic], Jefferson recorded recipes for ice cream, biscuit de Savoye, wine jellies, meringues, macaroons, *blanc manger*, *pêches à l'eau de vie*, (brandied peaches), Petit’s method of making coffee, and instructions on preserving *haricots vers* [sic] for winter use.⁴⁷ These manuscripts further evidence Jefferson’s valiant effort to augment the products on his Table with more sophisticated dishes. The recipe for biscuit de Savoye, a cookie-like biscuit, contains twelve eggs, but only six tablespoons of sugar and six tablespoons of flour. This recipe could not have produced the biscuit-like consistency that Jefferson enjoyed enough to record. The statesman also made note of a simple task, Petit’s method of making coffee, something he probably never did for himself, and thus something he found interesting. He once again proved himself an avid scholar, but a product of his society within his traditional gender role; he never set foot in a kitchen let alone stood over a hot stove. As Jefferson was placidly making observations about macaroni and brandied peaches, however, the world around him began to ferment into turmoil.

“The gay and thoughtless Paris is now become a furnace of Politics,” Thomas Jefferson wrote in the months preceding the French Revolution.

All the world is run politically mad. Men, women, and children talk nothing else; and you know that naturally they talk much, loud and warm. Society is spoilt by it, at least for those who, like myself, are but lookers on.⁴⁸

However dangerous the political situation became in those weeks, Jefferson stood witness to a dinner that used the art of political diplomacy at the table, at *his* Table. On August 25, 1789, Jefferson received a hurried letter from the Marquis de Lafayette, friend of Jefferson, hero of the American Revolution, and head of the French National Guard:

“I Beg for liberty’s sake You will Breack Every Engagement to Give us a dinner to Morrow Wenesday [sic]. We shall Be some Members of the National Assembly – eight of us whom I want to Coalize as Being the only Means to prevent a total dissolution and a civil war. The difficulty Between them is the King’s veto. Some want it If they don’t agree in a few days, we shall Have no Great Majority in a favour [sic] of any plan, and it must end in a war Because the discontented party will unite either with Aristocratic, or factious people. These gentlemen wish to Consult You and me, they will dine to morrow at your House as Mine is alwais full. I depend on you to receive us. Perhaps they will Be late but I shall Be precisely at three with you and I think this dinner of an immediate and Great importance.”⁴⁹

Despite the difficult position in which Lafayette placed Jefferson, as Jefferson harbored the clandestine dinner as a foreign minister, the Frenchman taught him an invaluable lesson in diplomacy. The second meal he recorded in his Autobiography, after his formative dinners with Governor Fauquier, was the Lafayette’s dinner, at which he was simply an observer:

These were the leading Patriots, of honest but differing opinions, sensible of the necessity of effecting a coalition by mutual sacrifices, knowing each other, and not afraid, therefore, to unbosom themselves mutually. This last was a material principle in the selection. . . . The cloth being removed, and wine set on the table, after the American manner, the Marquis introduced the objects of the conference, by summarily reminding them of the state of things in the Assembly, the course which the principles of the Constitution were taking, and the inevitable result, unless checked by more concord among the Patriots themselves. He observed, that although he also had his opinion, he was ready to sacrifice it to that of his brethren of the same cause; but that a common opinion must now be formed, or the Aristocracy would carry everything, and that, whatever they should now agree on, he, at the head of the National force, would maintain. The discussions began at the hour of four, and were continued till ten o’clock in the evening during which time, I was a silent witness to a coolness and candor of argument, unusual in the conflicts of political opinion; to a logical reasoning, and chaste eloquence, disfigured by no gaudy tinsel of rhetoric or declamation, and truly worthy of being placed in parallel with the finest dialogues of antiquity, as handed to us by Xenophon, by Plato and Cicero.⁵⁰

As a silent witness, he saw the fate of the constitution being decided. Though Jefferson understood and practiced the art of entertaining in Paris for a space of convivial conversation, elevated cuisine, and well-chosen wine, Lafayette's dinner made Jefferson privy to a more politically advantageous use of the Table. This forum of diplomacy became an example to Jefferson of how to use his perfected and refined Table for political means, to move men with gentility and grace.

This episode also gives insight into Jefferson's reputation as a host in France. The Marquis de Lafayette desired to use Jefferson's home as a meeting place, not only because it was safer politically, but also because it would not have looked out of the ordinary. Jefferson's Table could compete with the best of Paris. During his years in Paris, Jefferson organized a household and trained a staff to excel in the art of entertaining. He fully adopted the French style and philosophy of dining, creating a space where the cuisine and wine accompanied a free flow of uninterrupted, enlightened conversation. He perfected his interests both in and away from the city, especially those in cuisine and wine, to make the products of his Table among the best in Paris. Though he had arrived as an apprentice, he left as a master. Equal to any Parisian host, he knew that he excelled in his art.

The dinner he gave for Lafayette and his guests was the last great affair he hosted in France. At the end of September 1789, Jefferson departed Paris with his daughters. He wanted to take a leave of absence from his post for five or six months, during which time he would accompany his two daughters back to Virginia and take care of the affairs of his estate that only he could settle.⁵¹ Though he intended to return the next year, he had no way of knowing that he would never see Paris again. He left France with an immeasurable amount of knowledge that he put into practice when he reached his own country once more. He maintained a connection with

many of the friends and acquaintances that he made during his five year tenure as a foreign minister. When in Paris, Jefferson had started the practice of sharing the best products of Europe and the New World with correspondents on either side of the Atlantic. Thomas Jefferson's love of sending and receiving novelties that he considered the best that either continent had to offer developed into a constant transatlantic exchange of goods and ideas that he continued for the rest of his life; this practice can aptly be described as the "Jeffersonian Exchange."

Chapter IV: The Jeffersonian Exchange

They have no apple here to compare with our Newtown pipping. They have nothing which deserves the name of a peach; there being not sun enough to ripen the plumbpeach and the best of their soft peaches being like our autumn peaches. Their cherries and strawberries are fair, but I think less flavoured. Their plumbs I think are better; so also the gooseberries, and the pears infinitely beyond any thing we possess. They have no grape better than our sweet-waters.¹

– Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Paris, 1785

Jefferson's tenure in Paris inaugurated an era of unprecedented discovery and cultivation of his interests. For Jefferson these interests were important in and of themselves, but much of the pleasure and enjoyment he found in them, however, came from sharing what he discovered. The abandon with which he devoted himself to his interests in wine, cuisine, horticulture, entertaining, and ideas in Paris, accompanied an equally strong tendency to share this enthusiasm in his correspondence. His letters were often accompanied by samples of the novelty, such as orders of wine, books, seeds, tree grafts, vinegar, maple sugar, and many more. At times, however, he realized some of the products of his own country were superior to those he could find in Europe. Thus he requested that friends and relatives send him seeds to grow in his Paris garden or items for use in his Paris kitchen, introducing Parisian elites to foodstuffs hitherto unknown to them. When he left Paris in 1789, he continued this practice, importing the items from Europe that he found indispensable and sending seeds and foodstuffs that his friends in France requested from the United States. The most significant import was the arrival of the contents of Jefferson's Paris home in 1789 and 1790, which demonstrates the superiority of Jefferson's style of dining to what was available in the United States at the time. Thus, Jefferson found himself the center of a trade of goods, plants, and ideas between two continents and this practice can mostly aptly be described as the "Jeffersonian Exchange." Jefferson inaugurated this practice during his Paris years and continued it throughout his life in order to procure for his

Table the best that both continents had to offer. Though Jefferson engaged in this exchange until his death, especially importing foodstuff and wine during his Presidency, the greatest rate of exchange between the two continents occurred during the Paris years and period between Jefferson's return to the United States in 1789 and his resignation as Secretary of State in 1794.

When Jefferson found something new, he felt compelled to share it with friends and relatives who he thought would appreciate it, sending them samples and rarely taking the expense of shipping such items across the Atlantic Ocean into account. He asked John Bondfield, a French merchant from whom Jefferson often ordered, to send a number of shipments to Virginia and other parts of the United States during his five years in Paris. For example, he sent twenty pounds each of anchovies, dried figs, and raisins, as well as a great quantity of wine, to his brother-in-law Francis Eppes.² He also sent back novel items that he discovered at the tables of his hosts. Once, he even sent a servant to "enquire of the Chevalr. De la Luzerne's maître d'Hotel what kind of vinegar" he served at table.³ This "Vinaigre à 'estragon" or tarragon vinegar became a favorite of Jefferson's, and a recipe for this vinegar later appears in a Monticello recipe book. At the time, however, he simply ordered a great quantity and sent three dozen bottles to Philadelphia for a friend named Francis Hopkins.

As much as France, and especially Paris, captivated Thomas Jefferson, he still missed the comforts of his Virginia home. While most of his homesickness could not be remedied while at his post, some small comforts could be sent to him. Despite residing in a country with many of the world's best vineyards, Thomas Jefferson continued to enjoy the wine he drank throughout his life, Madeira. However, he wrote to an American merchant that finding good Madeira in Europe proved impossible. He ordered an entire pipe (about 475 liters) to be sent from New York as soon as possible.⁴

Jefferson had as many opinions about the produce he found in France as he had about the wine. He wrote to friends and family in Virginia, notably Nicholas Lewis and James Madison, with whom he shared his great interests in horticulture, wine, and literature. Within months of his arrival, he observed that pears and apricots grew better in France, while cherries and grapes were equal. The peaches, nectarines, apples, strawberries, and raspberries, however, were far inferior.⁵ He repeated much the same in a letter to James Madison in 1785:

They have no apple here to compare with our Newtown pipping. They have nothing which deserves the name of a peach; there being not sun enough to ripen the plumbpeach and the best of their soft peaches being like our autumn peaches. Their cherries and strawberries are fair, but I think less flavoured. Their plumbs I think are better; so also the gooseberries, and the pears infinitely beyond any thing we possess. They have no grape better than our sweet-waters.⁶

Mostly likely in response to such a letter, James Madison later sent Jefferson two barrels of apples from Virginia, along with a box of plants and two barrels of cranberries.⁷ Jefferson remained very opinionated about the foods he discovered in Europe, but was also vocal about those products of his own country that he felt were superior to those he could find in France, and often requested that they be sent to Paris.

Jefferson knew that some foodstuffs, goods, and seeds from the United States rivaled those in Paris, and he intended to share their superiority with the elites of Paris that dined at his Table. He created a garden at his Paris home, tended by a gardener, in which he grew some of his favorite vegetables and fruits with seeds provided by merchants, friends, and family at home. John Bartram, a horticulturalist in Philadelphia, sent him a box of seeds in 1786, unfortunately the catalog that Bartram noted as having added does not survive.⁸ Jefferson did, however, write to Nicholas Lewis, who cared for his estate in Virginia in his absence, and Anthony Giannini, a vigneron who cared for his garden and orchard, asking for particular seeds and items from Monticello, specifically requesting the seeds of watermelons, cantaloupes, and sweet potato.⁹

The French had little exposure to such novelties at table, and as a host, Jefferson enjoyed introducing his guests to new foods, displaying the value of new foodstuffs to Parisian friends. He told Lewis, “I cultivate in my own garden here Indian corn for the use of my own table, to eat green in our manner.”¹⁰ Those of Jefferson’s class would probably never have eaten corn before. The upper classes ate white flour and considered corn an inferior grain, a food reserved for the poorest of the poor. Though corn was common in southern France and northern Italy, the fashionable considered it a food more fit for pigs than for humans. Jefferson, however, served the fresh corn at his Table for his guests, indicating that he desired to introduce new foodstuffs and shatter existing conceptions. Thus, this exchange came to encompass more than just seeds, plants, and goods, but also ideas about cuisine that expanded the horizons of those with whom Jefferson interacted.

Life in Paris gave Thomas Jefferson the opportunity to correspond with, and possibly meet, people whose work he had read as a student of philosophy, science, and horticulture. One such correspondent was Antoine Parmentier. A pharmacist by training, Parmentier became an advocate for the cultivation of the potato to alleviate the food shortages suffered by the peasant classes in Europe.¹¹ As a prisoner of war in Prussia during the Seven Years’ War, Parmentier ate the tuber and became convinced of its wholesomeness.¹² The Frenchman, however, was ahead of his time. Most of his contemporaries thought the potato to be poisonous and cause leprosy, based upon the fact that the potato resembled the deformed limbs of lepers. Parmentier spent many years trying to change this view. He began to publish books and pamphlets explaining the value of the potato, and even gave a dinner party in 1778 featuring potatoes in every course for notable Parisians in science and politics, including American minister Benjamin Franklin.¹³ Jefferson took Franklin’s place as minister six years later; however, the two Americans were in

Paris together for a year before Jefferson officially assumed the post. It is not inconceivable that Franklin introduced Jefferson to Parmentier, but it is undeniable that Jefferson would have been pleased to make Parmentier's acquaintance.

In Thomas Jefferson's 1783 Catalog of Books, among those on cookery, he listed four of Parmentier's works. Jefferson must have accepted Parmentier's views on the subject, as he planted potatoes in the Monticello kitchen garden as early as 1772 when Americans did not routinely plant potatoes until the middle of the next century.¹⁴ As a scientist, he readily experimented and as a philosopher he willingly studied new ideas, even when it concerned such quotidian items as the potato. He also served the potato at his table later in life. Though considered a low class food by most of society, Jefferson, who took a keen interest in improving the produce of the American garden, seems to have accepted both the potato, as a welcome addition to his table, and Parmentier's ideas. Even if the two never met, they certainly corresponded. Though some letters have never been found, Thomas Jefferson recorded them in his Summary Journal of Letters where he recorded all correspondence sent and received. From the letter that does survive, it seems that Jefferson and Parmentier were involved in a business deal concerning rent payments.¹⁵

Just as Parmentier's work had spread his ideas to Jefferson in the New World, Jefferson also wanted to send his observations back to the United States to enhance the quality and marketability of American products. Though most of his study of horticulture remained an entirely personal endeavor, on occasion, some of his work as a statesman led him to take an interest in crops that could greatly improve American agriculture. In his opinion, none could have greater importance than rice. He studied the rice grown in Lombardy and Piedmont, the quality of the rice from the Carolinas, and their respective prices in the French Market. When

he visited Lombardy he smuggled some rice from the country in the hope that the planters in the Carolinas could improve their crop and increase its value on the international market. Jefferson wrote to Ralph Izard, a former delegate to the Continental Congress from South Carolina,

I am satisfied that the rice of Lombardy is of a different species from yours. The exportation of it, in the husk being prohibited, I could not bring with me but as much as my pockets would hold, which I have sent to your society of agriculture.¹⁶

The representative of the society of agriculture to whom Jefferson sent this sample of rice, William Drayton, became a regular correspondent.¹⁷ In addition to explaining his interest in rice, Jefferson also described to Drayton the other plants he found in France that would improve American agriculture if brought to the United States. He described the olive tree as the “tree the least known in America, and yet the most worthy of being known.”¹⁸ Among its merits, Jefferson listed the use of olive oil in cooking among its principle uses by which it rendered “an infinitude” of vegetables, “proper and comfortable nourishment.”¹⁹

Ever the experimenter, Jefferson still had not abandoned his idea of making olives a staple crop in America when he returned to the United States. Even though the trees routinely died during transport and seemed to have difficulty growing in the climate of the Carolinas, he continued with this unprofitable and seemingly foolish scheme. To keep them alive, Jefferson suggested to Charles Coatesworth Pinckney, former delegate to the Continental Congress from South Carolina, that a laborer be employed to pick the plants and travel with them to Bordeaux where he would personally place them on the ship to ensure their safe passage.²⁰ Pinckney accepted Jefferson’s offer to put the plan into motion. Though this seems an overly burdensome and wholly unnecessary venture, Jefferson seemed unable to see beyond the scheme he envisioned to the practicality of the matter. The interest took precedence over finance or practicality.

Just as olive trees and rice came under Jefferson's scheme of making the country more profitable and self-sufficient, his return to the United States brought another such foodstuff to his attention. In a letter to Drayton concerning a shipment of olive trees that Jefferson sent, Jefferson wrote,

The attention now paying to the sugar-Maple tree promises us an abundant supply of sugar at home: and I confess I look with infinite gratification to the addition to the products of the U.S. of three such articles as oil, sugar, and upland rice.²¹

Jefferson hoped that the maple tree could be widely cultivated enough to replace or at least supplement the sugar that the States imported from the West Indies, which was becoming more expensive.²² He added maple sugar to his scheme of domestically produced olive oil and rice that could either replace imports or be of sufficient quality to export instead. Jefferson's mercantilist scheme grew out of his interests in agriculture. Though this lofty plan failed miserably, he tried, at least in part, to spread these ideas as often as possible, even beginning to buy as much maple sugar as white cane sugar in his own household.²³ Upon request, he also sent some maple sugar to William Short in Paris, who wrote that the "friends to humanity here, in which class you know this most excellent family stands high, wish much for the success of the maple sugar."²⁴

Short's request shows that the Jeffersonian Exchange continued long after Jefferson returned home. From the United States, however, Jefferson began sending the products of his own country to those he met in France, and began requesting items that he had learned to love while living in Paris. Williams Short, who remained in France to settle Jefferson's affairs and then stayed to do other work for the United States government, became an intermediary of this Jeffersonian Exchange, often writing on behalf of the elites of Paris society, asking Jefferson for

seeds or grafts of America's best plants. The Dutchess D'Enville asked for seeds from Jefferson, and the Duke de la Rochefoucauld "begged for a few grafts" of Jefferson's best peaches.²⁵

As in France, Jefferson continued as the center of an exchange of information, not just seeds and goods. As his knowledge of Europe, wines, and cuisine became well known in his own country, many of his fellow Americans came to him for advice and ideas. When Massachusetts politician and future vice president Elbridge Gerry wrote to ask Jefferson about the wine they drank together, Jefferson informed him that it was Sauterne, and gave instructions about how to acquire some and when to drink it.²⁶ When James Monroe prepared to take Jefferson's former position in France, Jefferson gave him suggestions about which wines to buy and which wine merchants to use.²⁷

The importance of Jefferson's advice did not go unnoticed, and a wine merchant from whom he ordered white wine wrote to thank then Secretary of State Jefferson for recommending their wines to friends.²⁸ In this particular area, Jefferson had few qualms about making his opinions known. To Alexander Donald, a Richmond merchant and frequent correspondent, he provided an extensive list of his favorite wines: red wines included Chateau-Margaux, Tour de Segur, Hautbrion, De la Fite and white wines included Canton of Grave, Sauterne, Prignac, Barsac.²⁹ In addition to advice about wine, he also received requests for advice about food production. When a correspondent asked him about making Parmesan cheese, Jefferson sent copies of his notes from his trip to Lombardy, wishing him luck with a warning that it had been "tried in other places in Europe without success."³⁰

Jefferson became known for his expertise, and people saw his ideas and his knowledge as influential and important. One important example of how well respected he became can be found in a request from President Washington to order wines for state dinners. Washington

understood the unequaled extent to which the former minister's connections with the best vineyards rivaled that of all of his countrymen. Jefferson promptly wrote to William Short to arrange purchase of forty dozen bottles from "M. Dorsay's vineyard in Champagne," of "the best year he has, for present drinking" and "[i]t is to be *Non-mousseux* [not bubbly]." ³¹ The last bit of the request was obviously a Jeffersonian preference, and evidence that Jefferson picked Washington's wines for him, as most everyone considered champagne with bubbles the fashion by this time. ³² In addition to the champagne, Jefferson ordered other wines for Washington. A second letter to Short requested that thirty dozen bottles of Sauterne, twenty dozen bottles of Bordeaux de Segur, and ten dozen bottles of Frontignan accompany the forty dozen already requested. ³³

Thomas Jefferson's exchange of foods, wines, goods, and ideas, became an important part of his Table because it helped him acquire the refined items he wished to display, but it also helped him fulfill a key part of his philosophy of dining. Entertaining meant sharing with his guests, or when his guests could not be present, he shared by sending samples of the seeds or products. Sharing at Table, including novel foodstuffs, excellent wines, and conversation about elevated ideas that enlightened his guests, was a hallmark of Jefferson's style as a host. The frequent correspondence and shipments in the Jeffersonian Exchange was another example of his desire to share his interests. However, another facet of the Jeffersonian Exchange, though less apparent to his friends and guests than his letters and packages, has equally important implications for the development of Jefferson's Table as a space in which to create an experience of dining in a refined environment. The two shipments of household items, kitchen instruments, wines, and foodstuffs from Jefferson's Paris home that arrived in the United States in 1789 and

1790 showcased Jefferson's superiority in creating a dining atmosphere in America akin to the refined atmosphere that he had enjoyed in Paris.

When Jefferson returned the United States in 1789, he only intended to stay a short while before returning to Paris. Thus, he left his Paris home in the care of his *maître d'* Adrien Petit and his secretary William Short and returned to the United States with a small amount of baggage, about fifty hampers, boxes, trunks, and bales. They contained mostly what Jefferson, his daughters, and two slaves needed for the journey and items for the gardens at Monticello. There were five boxes of plants for the kitchen gardens, including alpine strawberries and melons, and a plethora of grafts for the orchard. In addition to the pears and figs he enjoyed in France, he also brought cork trees with him as well. In an era when bottles were expensive, Jefferson often bought casks of wine to bottle himself. He also wanted to grow the cork to stop the bottles, a precious material as well. Bottles, however, traveled better than barrels, and in 1789 Jefferson stocked the Monticello cellar with more than two-hundred bottles from France. To stock his pantry he brought some of his favorite European foods: twelve pounds of macaroni, forty-seven pounds of Parmesan cheese, twenty-four bottles of vinegar, and twenty-one bottles of oil. The rest of the shipment included machines he purchased and clothes.³⁴

Upon landing in America, however, he discovered that Washington had appointed him to the position of Secretary of State. Thus, he wrote to William Short, whom he had left in charge of his affairs, telling him of the change in appointment. Jefferson asked his secretary and his *maître d'* Adrien Petit, to pack his house, sell many articles, dismiss his staff, and send him his belongings. After writing very specific instructions about how to pack things, he also included a list of foodstuffs that he wanted Petit to procure and bring with him, insinuating that Jefferson desired Petit to continue as his *maître d'* in America. Those indispensable items

included macaroni, Parmesan cheese, Marseilles figs, raisins, almonds, mustard, tarragon vinegar other “good vinegar,” oil, anchovies, and the wine from his cellar, which needed to be bottled before transport.³⁵

Petit arrived late in 1790 and the shipment from Jefferson’s Paris home arrived not long after on November 30, 1790. He noted to his daughter Martha that Petit was opening his things from Paris “as fast as the workmen [could] make room,”³⁶ and not long after he began “to dine at home.”³⁷ The eighty-six crates of household furniture and goods, kitchen tools, foods, and wines rivaled any shipment from a single household that had come across the Atlantic before.³⁸ The contents of these crates show how Jefferson’s purchases in Paris created a household perfect for entertaining. The effectiveness of his Table as a space to create a dining experience came, in part, from the tools that he acquired for his kitchen, the flatware silverware, and glassware that graced the table, and the novel foodstuffs and wines from Europe that his guests would have enjoyed.

James Hemings, probably not unknowingly, had some of the best kitchen tools in the country.³⁹ Though routine in the homes of fashionable Parisians, the quantity and quality of the instruments rivaled the kitchens of his contemporaries in America. In addition to two cast iron stoves, twenty-eight round saucepans, two oval saucepans and various spoons, ladles, cleavers, knives, spits, tongs, and pokers, he had nineteen copper saucepan covers and two copper frying pans. Copper cookware was not widely used in the United States at the time. Copper was far more expensive and required greater care, but the pans had better heat conductivity and facilitated making the delicate French sauces that Jefferson enjoyed.⁴⁰ This is one small instance in which no expense was spared for taste.

No expense was spared at table either, and though his dinner parties rarely included large numbers, he was never ill prepared to receive numerous guests. Spread among the crates were: ten dozen porcelain plates, dishes for hors d'oeuvres, forty-two porcelain cups, thirty-nine porcelain saucers, two porcelain soup tureens, four large oval platters, twenty-three table settings, thirty knives, and thirty forks. Also carefully packed in the crates were thirty-nine glass goblets, twelve crystal goblets, and eight crystal decanters.

Indispensable food items accompanied the rest of Jefferson's possessions. A barrel each of olive oil and anchovies joined two cases of macaroni, mustard, almonds, and forty bottles of vinegar. The last item that Jefferson could not, indeed would not, live without was his wine. He asked Petit to have it all bottled and packed carefully for transport. According to the packing list, crates sixty-four to seventy-two contained a total of 450 bottles of wine. The customs form lists 680 bottles of wine, meaning that two additional crates, whose contents are not listed, probably contained wine as well.⁴¹ If this was the remainder of the cellar that Jefferson had in Paris, he clearly consumed the majority of the wine that he purchased while living there.

These eighty-six crates, coupled with the hampers of goods, wines, plants, and trees Jefferson brought back the year before, and the expertise of his staff probably made Jefferson's Table the best in the nation at the time. His well-developed interests in wine, cuisine, gardening, and educated conversation contributed to the refined experience and atmosphere that Jefferson desired his Table to convey. Jefferson introduced his guests, to novel items he discovered and those items he found to be best from either side of the Atlantic. The results of the Jeffersonian Exchange and the contacts that he developed in Europe helped Jefferson maintain the level of excellence that his Table could display at this time in his life, and even rise to new heights during his presidency with the greater salary. Though, like the Table, the Jeffersonian Exchange

continued throughout Jefferson's life, it was most pronounced during the Paris years and first years after his return until he retired from his position as Secretary of State in 1794. While the "Jeffersonian Exchange" continued in America with the same gusto that it had in Paris, the Table, however, developed little between Jefferson's return from Paris and his inauguration as President, due to circumstances both within and outside his control.

Chapter V: A Master Adrift

“I should envy you the tranquil occupations of your situation were it not that I value your happiness more than my own. But I too shall have my turn. The ensuing year will be the longest of my life, and the last of such hateful labours. The next we will sow our cabbages together.”¹

– Thomas Jefferson to Martha Jefferson Randolph, Philadelphia, March 22, 1792

Thomas Jefferson mastered the art of entertaining in Paris and, through the cultivation of his own “Jeffersonian Exchange,” attained the best products for his Table from both sides of the Atlantic, no matter where he resided at the time. The two shipments from his Paris home and his well-trained staff should have prepared him for a style of entertaining far beyond any of his American contemporaries. From the time that Jefferson returned from France in 1789 until he assumed the presidency in 1801, however, Jefferson was in a period a transition. During this period Jefferson assumed the position of Secretary of State, living in New York and Philadelphia, but, feeling that his desire for solitude outweighed his desire for society, he retired for Monticello in 1794. America, however, elected him Vice President, and he returned to Philadelphia in 1797 to serve the people. Though primed for using his Table to entertain, circumstances, both those within and outside his control, prevented Jefferson from using the Table as he had in France or as he would in the President’s House. With the notable exception of the Dinner Table Compromise in 1790, frequent moves, financial difficulties, problems affording and retaining his staff, and a desire to retreat to his home in solitude meant that Jefferson entertained far less and consequently did little to develop his Table during this era. The Table, or, rather, its conspicuous dormancy, reflected Jefferson’s own personal feelings during this time. Jefferson seemed adrift and unsettled, and his Table, a setting that usually grounded him and one in which he felt comfortable, reflected his uneasiness with his constantly changing circumstances.

Returning to rural Virginia after five years in refined and bustling Paris must have been a shock to Jefferson. Upon arriving in port, he received news that President Washington had asked him to be Secretary of State. Though he desperately wanted to return to Paris, he could not refuse the new President's offer of such a prestigious position. After spending a number of months at Monticello, Jefferson arrived in New York, then the capital city, in the early months of 1790. He took up residence at 57 Maiden Lane in lower Manhattan and immediately began to prepare his home.² Though his shipments from France would take many more months to arrive, he needed to be able to eat at home and entertain, at least in a limited fashion. His account book shows that among his first purchases were coffee pots, a teakettle, and a coffee mill, so that he could breakfast at home, along with a dozen sets of cutlery.³ Madeira and cider also featured among the indispensable items of his New York life, though he bought very limited quantities of the former and eleven dozen bottles of the latter.⁴ These provisions and tools, coupled with those items James Hemings probably packed and brought from Monticello when he traveled with his master to New York, allowed for Jefferson to at least hold a small dinner party in his new home.

After Jefferson's arrival in the new capital, it did not take long for him to put what he had learned in Paris to good use. Though the historic dinner party Jefferson would give would be small, it was not without great consequence. On April 12, 1790, three weeks after Jefferson arrived in New York, Speaker of the House James Madison led forces within Congress to vote down Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton's debt assumption plan.⁵ Hamilton's proposal suggested that the federal government assume the debts that the States incurred fighting the Revolutionary War in order to set the States on solid economic footing and, by offering bonds to pay for this debt, tie investors to the success of the new federal government. Madison's

work to defeat this plan devastated the fragile ego of Alexander Hamilton. Jefferson took note of the effect that this defeat had on the Secretary of the Treasury.

Going to the President's one day I met Hamilton as I approached the door. His look was sombre, haggard, and dejected beyond description. Even his dress uncouth and neglected. He asked to speak with me. We stood in the street near the door. He opened the subject of the assumption of the states debts, the necessity of it in the general fiscal arrangement and its indispensable necessity towards a preservation of the union[.]⁶

For Hamilton, normally exacting in appearance, his unkempt state spoke volumes about his personal involvement in this plan. Southerners, like Madison, disliked the plan because most of the heavy fighting occurred in the North and thus the debts of the Southern states incurred as a result of the conflict were much lower than in the North. Southerners wanted the northern States to pay their own debts, rather than pass them to the federal government. Jefferson understood Hamilton's plan would benefit the country as a whole, because it would set all of the States on equal and solid economic footing, while bonds issued to pay the debt would tie creditors to the success of the federal government if they wanted a return on their investment. Thus the Secretary of State set out to bring together a compromise by means of his greatest bargaining tool, his Table.

On considering the situation of things I thought the first step towards some conciliation of views would be to bring Mr. Madison and Colo. Hamilton to a friendly discussion of the subject. I immediately wrote to each to come and dine with me the next day, mentioning that we should be alone, that the object was to find some temperament for the present fever, and that I was persuaded that men of sound heads and honest views needed nothing more than explanation and mutual understanding to enable them to unite in some measures which might enable us to get along. They came.⁷

Jefferson recorded his recollections of the incident that came to be known as the "Dinner Table Compromise." It was a few hours' occurrence that significantly altered the American political scene at the time. To assure the passage of Hamilton's plan, the South would need to receive considerable concessions. Southern legislators and politicians wanted to move the capital to

another city. New York was too far removed from their States, and firmly entrenched in the North. Though many cities entered the discussion, a choice of a “spot on the Potomac” would satisfy the Southern delegation.⁸ The “spot on the Potomac,” however, was just that, a spot, or to be more accurate, a swamp. The capital would have to relocate to Philadelphia for a number of years before the city of Washington, District of Columbia would be ready to host the federal government.

This compromise, as Jefferson always remembered, happened at his Table. It could have been done in many different ways, but this was Jefferson’s way, and it worked. After years of politics at table in Paris, he felt at ease using this type of dinner affair to effect political change. Though the meal itself remains a mystery, such civilized conversations, most likely over wine after servants had cleared the cloth from the table, were not isolated incidents, and they became altogether common during his presidency. Based upon the state of his home at the time, the meal was probably not as grand an affair he could have constructed in Paris or even at Monticello, but it served its purpose.

Upon his return to the United States, Jefferson was no longer at the center of a social circle in which he was known for his reputation as being one of the city’s most gracious hosts. Thus, the formal levees on Tuesdays and public dinners on Thursdays held by President Washington comprised entertaining on the national stage.⁹ During these long evenings, men and women dined together, but when servants removed the table cloth, the ladies would remove to a nearby parlor to enjoy tea while men began to talk of serious politics while drinking port, smoking, and eating fruit and nuts.¹⁰ This style of entertaining in politics differed significantly from the style that Jefferson had employed in Paris or would use when president himself. Washington held more formal parties with a greater number of guests than Jefferson, who

preferred the French convention of dining without ceremony. Washington entertained in this fashion first in New York, and then in Philadelphia where the entire federal government moved in the last months of 1790.

Jefferson and the contents of his Paris household arrived in Philadelphia around the same time. Petit, who traveled to the United States to resume his post as Jefferson's *maitre d'hôtel*, arrived just in time to unpack the crates shipped from France and rejoined James Hemings on the staff. From late 1790 until Jefferson left Philadelphia in January, 1794, the two worked together once more. Jefferson wanted to recreate his Paris home, and only Hemings and Petit could make that possible. The two collaborated to make the household run smoothly. Petit went to the market and prepared the desserts, while James cooked the main meals.¹¹ The running and style of the house were clearly a comfort to Jefferson who fought to keep this sense of order as long as possible.

When Petit and Hemings had the Philadelphia house in order, Jefferson began to eat at home again, and probably began to entertain again, but on a small scale. Though guests doubtless came to dinner, and account books show regular expenses for groceries, the market, and a baker, no recorded accounts of these meals have been found. These expenses hold no comparison to the amount he spent while President, however, and he probably did not entertain frequently. He also purchased a few inexpensive casks of wine to supplement those supplies he had from Paris.¹² Despite Jefferson's work to recreate the Paris Table, however, this orderly existence did not last long, and for a number of reasons – Jefferson wanted to retire, and James Hemings wanted his freedom.

In 1793, Jefferson decided that he had been in politics for long enough and asked President Washington to accept his resignation. He left Philadelphia the following January.

Jefferson had long contemplated this change, yearning for the peace of his Monticello estate and family. In a letter to Martha Jefferson, he told her,

I should envy you the tranquil occupations of your situation were it not that I value your happiness more than my own. But I too shall have my turn. The ensuing year will be the longest of my life, and the last of such hateful labours. The next we will sow our cabbages together.¹³

As he often did throughout his life, Jefferson tired of politics. He was plagued by two divergent desires his entire life – society and solitude. He thought it his duty to serve his country when asked, and he also craved society in which to have educated conversation with intellectual equals. Concurrently, however, he desperately desired the peace and solitude of his plantation, a place he designed as a refuge into which he could retreat to study his interests, especially scholarship and horticulture. In Paris, and especially during the Presidency and his later years, the Table served as a place, in fact the only place, in which he could combine those two interests, gaining the company of intellectuals for conversation about his interests while finding refuge and escape in the interests he displayed on a finely laid table. At this time, however, the Table appears to have faded in importance for Jefferson. Though he still dined at home, he seems to have lost some of his panache for entertaining, probably because of an ardent desire to leave the city and retreat to a quiet life. He left at his first available opportunity.

Jefferson packed up his Philadelphia home and left the city, for what he expected to be the last time, in January of 1794. Thus, Jefferson himself chose the circumstances that ended an era. He took his finely crafted household away from a center where entertaining was possible, and brought it all to remote Monticello. He also left a job that gave him a steady salary, meaning that his long working relationship with Petit also had to end, as he could no longer pay the French *maître d'hôtel*'s wages. This also split Petit and Hemings, who excelled in running Jefferson's home together. However, Jefferson had planned for his eventual retreat to

Monticello by bringing Hemings to France and training him in French cooking, and he expected to depend on James' expertise for many decades. Unfortunately, Jefferson met with some of the unexpected consequences of giving his slave wonderful training and thus immense bargaining power.

When James Hemings returned to America, he probably felt the shock of re-acculturation as sharply as his master. Hemings, who enjoyed greater freedom abroad, probably felt chained when he returned to a society where slavery was the norm. He was, however, far more than a slave; he had an education and skill that made him invaluable. Jefferson could not afford a French cook, though he desperately wanted to continue to enjoy the French cuisine to which he had become accustomed in France. Jefferson's dependence on Hemings gave the slave bargaining power, and the power to bargain for wages was only the beginning. Jefferson appears to have paid James a regular wage both in Paris and in New York and Philadelphia, but James did not want a wage, he wanted his freedom. Jefferson however, felt that Hemings owed him a debt because he paid for the slave's culinary education, and to be repaid for this considerable expense, Jefferson expected a dependable chef.¹⁴ In 1793, master and slave struck a deal. James could earn his freedom if he trained another slave at Monticello in the art of French cuisine.¹⁵

Upon Jefferson's retirement James Hemings wasted little time in training his younger brother Peter. Though the estate was under major renovations, these two slaves prepared meals in an incredibly well equipped kitchen. The cooking implements that arrived in Philadelphia from Paris, came to Monticello in Jefferson's first retirement in 1794. Before leaving Monticello, James made an inventory of the kitchen tools at his disposal. It contained many of the same items that appear on the shipping inventory, including nineteen copper pans and a host of ladles, spoons, and skimmers.¹⁶ This list, recorded in James' own hand, indicates a level of

education largely unprecedented for slaves of his time. For two years James and Peter cooked together in the Monticello kitchen before James departed.¹⁷ Though James Hemings trained Peter Hemings in his art, and from later indication, Jefferson enjoyed Peter's cooking, giving James his freedom was simply another lost element of the Paris Table that Jefferson struggled to recreate in America.

Thomas Jefferson voluntarily left society when he resigned from his position as Secretary of State. He could not entertain as he had earlier, but his primary objective in leaving society was to find the solitude that he desired, two divergent desires he had yet to reconcile. This solitude gave him ample opportunity to renew his interest in gardening.

Jefferson told his daughter Martha that upon his retirement he wanted to "sow cabbages," and sow cabbages he did. His first activity upon his return to Virginia was the planning of his 1794 kitchen garden, filled with peas, beans, cauliflower, broccoli, beets, horseradish, lettuce, endive, radishes, celery, cucumbers, shallots, leeks, garlic, onion, scores of other vegetables, and, of course, cabbage.¹⁸ In his garden book, the avid gardener returned to recording when the spinach and peas appeared at table and how many trees in the orchard survived.¹⁹ He commented on this change in lifestyle to John Adams:

I return to farming with an ardour which I scarcely knew in my youth, and which has got the better of my love of study. Instead of writing 10. or 12. letters a day, which I have been in the habit of doing as a thing of course, I put off answering my letters now, farmer-like, till a rainy day, and then find it sometimes postponed by other necessary occupations.²⁰

This foray into farming, with new methods of crop rotation to increase yields, garnered less success than he had anticipated.²¹ Though his cash crops never supplied him with an abundance of cash, they were particularly unprofitable during this period of retirement. This failure, coupled with the lack of the regular salary he had received as a foreign minister and Secretary of

State, left him little extra cash.²² His interests, however, overruled the costs and he embarked on a full renovation of Monticello, based on the classical designs he had studied in Europe. In the midst of such construction, he did not want to lay down a cellar of wines, but he did still desire wine on his table. He asked James Monroe, then in France in Jefferson's old position, to order him some bottles of wine that were "old and ready for use" instead of wine he could leave to age for a number of years.²³

Getting such orders to his hilltop estate, however, proved an expensive proposition. Everything arrived by special order, and a great deal of Jefferson's correspondence, as it always did while living at Monticello, centered around orders, payments for orders, and methods of shipment and delivery. Though he desired to create a self-sufficient estate, some grocery items had to be purchased. His most common grocery orders included tea, coffee, sugar, molasses, rice, chocolate, spices, and rum or French brandy. Though fairly common in nature, these orders show some changes from those of previous years. He began to order both brown and white sugar, probably in response to his interest in the use of maple trees to replace foreign imports of sugar from the Caribbean. Though he had ordered spices before, the variety increased substantially to include allspice, nutmeg, cloves, cinnamon, and ginger, indicating their use in dishes not common in standard Virginia fare.²⁴

Though Jefferson continued in his interests in cuisine, gardening, and wine while in retirement at Monticello, he had little opportunity to share them with guests. The intellectual company with whom he desired to share his Table was in Philadelphia and France, far removed from Monticello. He later noted to his granddaughter, in hindsight, that this retirement soon made him melancholy. While Jefferson fought his conflict between society and solitude, America had other plans for Jefferson.

When the Electoral College elected Thomas Jefferson the second Vice President in 1796, Jefferson returned to Philadelphia the following year for the inauguration, perhaps somewhat ambivalently. Jefferson had previously packed his entire household, from the furniture to the bottles of wine, and integrated them into his existing Monticello estate in 1794. Unwilling to bring them all back to Philadelphia with him, especially because the capital was soon to move to Washington, he made other arrangements. As he had in the sweltering summers of the 1770s when he debated American independence, he took up residence in a boarding house for twenty-six dollars a week.²⁵ He chose John Francis' Hotel, run by an old Frenchman who served French wine.²⁶ This explains why Jefferson bought much less wine in these years, despite having a steady salary of \$5,000 a year.²⁷ Records of his accounts with John Francis show that he paid for wine as part of his board.²⁸ He also had his meals furnished by an outside cook. His expense memoranda noted that this cook or proprietor, Bossée, would "furnish a soupe, 2 dishes of meat [entrées] of which one may be Bouillie if desired) & 2 dishes of vegetables [] for one person 2. D. a day, per week."²⁹ Other expenses show that his breakfast consisted of bread, butter, tea, and coffee, similar to what he ate in Paris.³⁰ The arrangement, however, gave him no opportunity to entertain. He had no house and no household staff. Though he certainly socialized with other members of the government and attended dinner parties in their homes, he could not, without a house of his own, take his favorite role at the table, that of the host. A table at which he likely found himself a guest, possibly frequently, was in the dining room of John Adams.

As Jefferson served as Vice President, his old friend John Adams, though their relationship had cooled significantly, served as President. Accompanied by his wife Abigail, the second President took over his predecessor's habit of hosting formal parties. In contrast to the

style of entertaining that Jefferson later employed at the President's House in Washington, Adams' style of entertaining differed greatly. An account of a dinner held by President Adams noted that Abigail sat at the head of the table while John sat somewhere in the middle of the table set with china plates, glass tumblers, and wine glasses for the Madeira and port served.³¹ The member of Congress who wrote of this scene also noted that nine or ten dishes, or "covers," came to table.³² The principal dish was a head of beef à la mode, accompanied by a roasted pig, fish, leg of mutton, boiled fowl, tongue, corned beef, a dish of small birds, chicken pie, all of which was preceded by soup and accompanied by vegetables, peas, salad, potatoes, and cranberry sauce. This was followed by a spread of desserts: tarts, custard, jelly, ice cream, blanc mange, fresh fruit, and nuts.³³ This impressive array of foods probably equaled what Jefferson served during his own time as president, though Jefferson's wine was far superior. The difference lies mostly in the type of entertaining that Jefferson found important when gathering a group for a meal. President Adams did not use a round table and did not adopt the conventions of Parisian dining as Jefferson had, though they both lived in Paris at the same time, often dining with one another.

Jefferson often returned to Monticello during his Vice Presidency. Though he always missed his plantation home, he longed for it more when he had no proper household for himself in Philadelphia. Though unprepared for his election as Vice President in 1796, and despite the inconclusive results of the 1800 election that threw the decision to the House of Representatives, his election to the Presidency rattled Jefferson far less. Knowing the demands of his new position, he devoted himself to once again organizing a home fit for entertaining. A decade of circumstances that prevented him from using the Table to entertain as he would have liked, melted away with his election. Financial concerns, difficulty keeping a staff, constantly moving,

retirement, new elected positions, and a lack of a household created in Jefferson a sense of uneasiness, evident in the dormancy of his Table for a number of years. He could not share his passion for his interests, and dining as a host with guests had been difficult for a number of years. In addition, the desire for solitude had overpowered his need for society. When elected President of the United States, unable to retreat from his office, he embraced the Table as a place of refuge to enjoy and share his interests including good food, wine, art, travel, and conversation. Moreover, as he learned in Paris, he could use his Table for political means without discussing politics and it became integral to his style of governing.

Chapter VI: The President's Table

Th: Jefferson requests the favour of The Hon'ble. Mr. Cutts to dine with him the day after tomorrow at half after three, or at whatever later hour the House may rise. The favor of an answer is asked. Wednesday Jan'y 27th 1802.¹

– Thomas Jefferson to Congressman Richard Cutts, January 25, 1802

When Thomas Jefferson took the oath of office to become the third President of the United States, he knew exactly how he would govern in Washington. Never desirous of making public speeches or holding large soirées, Jefferson made his Table the centerpiece of his leadership style. Though circumstances outside of Jefferson's control had often meant that Jefferson could not entertain as he desired, the events that propelled him to the presidency in 1801 presented the perfect forum for using the Table. The President's House gave him the space, the salary gave him the greatest means of his lifetime, and the position gave him the power, not to rule, but to draw into his inner circle the kind of men who would enjoy the delights of his Table and the elevated conversation that Jefferson enjoyed. During the years of his presidency, the Table had a dual purpose. Jefferson understood how to use the Table as a political tool, but he also designed the Table to be a refuge from the harsh world of politics that surrounded him. Desiring escape, he used his Table to integrate the activities he enjoyed in solitude, gardening, food, wine, science, art, architecture, travel, and study, into his chosen social scene. The Table became his forum for social interaction and he felt comfortable there. Though he shied away from large groups, a small group put him at ease and gave him the control he desired to organize the dining room into a perfectly orchestrated experience with an incredible attention to detail. Though as President, he devoted his life to affairs of state, the affairs of his Table also took much of his attention. The Table was pivotal to his style of leadership among Washington's political elites, but also, in a time of much stress and trial, the Table presented an

opportunity to enjoy the pleasures of life in a space dedicated to excellent food and wine enjoyed by a company of equals engaged in enlightened conversation.

It is impossible to measure with any certainty how much, if any, effect Jefferson's table politics had on the affairs of Washington. Some historians believe that his dinners did have some effect, at least in specific instances, as Senator William Plummer was said to admit that the "the President's dinners had silenced them" in their opposition to one of the President's nominations.² Historian Catherine Allgor suggests that the results may have been more mixed.³ The important element in analyzing the use of dinner table conversation and atmosphere as a leadership style lies in an analysis of Jefferson's vision for this Table. Desirous of never having to deal directly with conflict, Jefferson administered by guiding his guests through his simple, yet elegant and refined dinners. Dining with Thomas Jefferson was as much an experience as it was a meal, and the President neglected no details. In the President's dining room, men found common ground discussing matters of similar interest as gentlemen far above the "bitter and deadly"⁴ game of politics that consumed their daily lives. According to celebrated Jefferson historian Dumas Malone, Jefferson hoped to increase good will with his dinner performances.⁵ From this conclusion, many historians since have studied Jefferson's entertaining as a political tool in and of itself.⁶ However, historians have failed to place his style of entertaining as President well within the scope of his other interests, or as a lifelong endeavor that evolved as circumstances of his life allowed. During the Presidency, Jefferson changed his Table to fit this new need in his life, and he did so with grace and efficacy to move politics in Washington.

In designing a dining experience for his guests, Jefferson always desired to have control of the situation. It was not an overbearing desire to dominate his guests, but rather a philosophy that, in a world and city where events and circumstances could not be controlled, Jefferson could

create a space and experience perfectly organized for the party to enjoy the pleasure of life, good food, wine, and conversation, to the fullest.

Enlightened conversation was one of Jefferson's greatest delights in life, and his Table in the President's House became a center of ideas and educated discussion among some of the greatest minds in the country. Though he invited men of politics, he discouraged partisan political talk at his table.⁷ Instead, the President preferred that the company discuss more refined topics. Accounts of Jefferson's Table explain how he moved conversation to include all of his guests and discuss the topics he wanted to talk about. Mrs. Margaret Bayard Smith, the wife of a Washington newspaper editor and close friend of Jefferson, recorded details of Jefferson's dinners in a book of her letters entitled *The First Forty Years of Washington Society*. Of the conversations during dinner, Mrs. Smith recalled,

At Mr. Jefferson's table the conversations were general; every guest was entertained and interested in whatever topic was discussed. To each an opportunity was offered for the exercise of his colloquial powers and the stream of conversation thus enriched by such various contributions flowed on full, free and animated: of course he took the lead and gave the tone, with a tact so true and discriminating that he seldom missed his aim, which was to draw forth the talents and information of each and all of his guests and to place everyone in an advantageous light and by being pleased with themselves, be enabled to please others.⁸

Keeping the topics to those things above politics, such as art, music, architecture, travel, gardening, and wine provided an informal chatter that allowed elected officials to negotiate without actually doing so or risking their reputations.⁹ Dinner table conversation made disagreeing politicians into gentlemen who could easily agree on the finer things in life.

Conversation, however, could not be candid if Jefferson's guests did not feel an intense sense of privacy in the President's dining room. Jefferson, following the French fashion, went to great lengths to ensure an intimate atmosphere within the dining room.

When he had any persons dining with him, with whom he wishes to enjoy a free and unrestricted flow of conversation, the number of persons never exceeded four, and by each individual was placed a dumb-waiter, conveying everything necessary for the progress of the dinner from beginning to end, so as to make the attendance of servants entirely unnecessary, believing as he did that much of the domestic and even public discord was produced by the mutilated and misconstrued [sic] repetition of free conversation at dinner tables.¹⁰

First introduced to dumbwaiters in France, Jefferson utilized them while abroad, and had some specially made for entertaining at the President's House. They minimized the need for servants to enter the dining room and thus kept the conversations that took place within secure from servants who sometimes spoke too freely. He is said to have remarked to guests after shutting the dining room doors behind him, "You see we are alone, and our walls have no ears."¹¹ For Jefferson the constant perfectionist, however, even the infrequent interruptions by servants to bring in hot dishes and clear dirty ones constituted too much of a security risk for the President, and the resourceful inventor found a solution.

[T]here was in his dining room an invention for introducing and removing the dinner without the opening and shutting of doors. A set of circular shelves were so contrived in the wall, that on touching a spring they turned into the room loaded with the dishes places on them by the servants without the wall, and by the same process the removed dishes were conveyed out of the room.¹²

Retrieving dishes from these shelves and serving his guests himself became part of his performance. It enhanced his personal contact with his guests and placed an emphasis on the equality of those who dined together with the President. He had little patience for pomp and rank, always choosing equality and republican simplicity instead.¹³ It was part of his persona. In France, and even before, Jefferson adhered to the French ideal of dining without ceremony, shedding servants at Table to foster an intimate atmosphere where all felt at ease.

Another French convention that Jefferson used throughout his life helped foster this atmosphere. Dining at a round table had been part of Parisian dining for a number of decades, but it offered Jefferson distinct advantages that never went unnoticed by Mrs. Smith:

At his usual dinner parties the company seldom or ever exceeded fourteen, including himself and his secretary. . . . [T]his limited number prevented the company's forming little knots and carrying on in undertones separate conversations, a custom so common and almost unavoidable in a large party. . . . Instead of being arrayed in strait parallel lines, where they could not see the countenances of those who sat on the same side, they encircled a round or oval table where all could see each others faces. . . . Let any dinner giver try the experiment and he will certainly be convinced of the truth of this fact. As small, well assorted company, seated around a circular table will ensure more social enjoyment.¹⁴

Not only could diners see each other, more importantly, Jefferson could see all of his guests. Historians have suggested that this ensured Jefferson's complete control over the party,¹⁵ but this was simply a part of enlightened conversation among a group, all of whom were encouraged to participate and add their own thoughts. Part of Jefferson's role as a host included facilitating the conversation to ensure that all found enjoyment in it.

The sense of conviviality and refinement found at Jefferson's Table rarely went unnoticed by the President's guests. Many of those who dined at his table recorded their experiences in diaries and letters that provide a glimpse into the atmosphere that Jefferson worked so hard to create in his dining room. From all accounts his dining room was rarely empty. According to Edmund Bacon, Jefferson's overseer at Monticello who traveled to Washington at the end the President's second term to pack the house, Jefferson entertained constantly and talked for hours.

He had a very long dining-room, and his table was chock-full every one of the sixteen days I was there. There were Congressmen, foreigners, and all sorts of people to dine with him. He dined at four o'clock, and they generally sat and talked until night.¹⁶

Members of Congress were among Jefferson's most frequent guests. John Quincy Adams, while serving in Congress dined with the President numerous times. By his accounts, the guests numbered between fourteen and seventeen.¹⁷ Other guests placed that number lower. Dr. Samuel Mitchill, a Republican member of the Congress wrote in his description that,

He has generally a company of eight or ten persons to dine with him every day. The dinners are neat and plentiful, and no healths are drunk at table, nor are any toasts or sentiments given after dinner. You drink as you please, and converse at ease. In this way every guest feels inclined to drink to the digestive or the social point, and no further.¹⁸

Though Mitchill notes the way in which guests enjoyed their wine at Jefferson's table, the most detailed description of the spread that reached the table comes from the description of Reverend Manasseh Cutler when he dined with Jefferson on February 6, 1802:

“Dined at the President's Dinner not as elegant as when we dined before. Rice soup, round of beef, turkey, mutton, ham, loin of veal, cutlets of mutton or veal, fried eggs, fried beef, a pie called macaroni, which appeared to be a rich crust filled with the strillions of onions, or shallots, which I took it to be, tasted very strong, and not agreeable. Mr. Lewis told me there were none in it; it was an Italian dish, and what appeared like onions was made of flour and butter, with a particularly strong liquor mixed with them. Ice-cream very good, crust wholly dried, crumbled into thin flakes; a dish somewhat like a pudding, -- inside white as milk or curd, very porous and light, covered with cream-sauce – very fine. Many other jimcracks, a great variety of fruit, plenty of wines, and good. President social.”¹⁹

This account gives a rare glimpse into what guests actually ate at the Jefferson's table. Though there would have been vegetables, the great quantity and variety of meat was the centerpiece of the meal. The Reverend seemed quite taken aback by the introduction to entirely new foods for him. He had clearly never seen pasta before, nor tasted parmesan cheese, which is probably the flavor to which he objected. According the later Monticello recipes for macaroni, there was no “strange liquor” added, only the imported cheese. He also notes that there was a dessert course that included just as many novelties as the first, though he seems familiar with ice cream,

meaning that Jefferson, contrary to popular belief, was not the one to introduce the dish to the United States.

Guests to the President's House saw a well-executed performance that included good company, a well-laid table, an invisible wait staff, excellent food, and superb wine. Part of Jefferson's prowess as a host was to make this entire performance look effortless. In reality, however, Jefferson spent much time and effort to make the dining room run smoothly, something he would have found impossible without his great love of entertaining and impeccable attention to detail.

Invitations to dine with the President became a feat of Jeffersonian record keeping. Due to the volume of "favors" that Jefferson, or rather, his personal secretary Meriweather Lewis, needed to send, he had cards printed with blanks for the name of the guest and date of the dinner.²⁰ One such card read,

Th: Jefferson requests the favour of The Hon'ble. Mr. Cutts to dine with him the day after tomorrow at half after three, or at whatever later hour the House may rise. The favor of an answer is asked. Wednesday Jan'y 27th 1802²¹

These invitations, however, were not addressed randomly or without the utmost care given to the mix of company that would later encircle the table. Based on a manuscript in his papers, Jefferson appears to have kept a list of every person he entertained during his second term in office.²² No similar document has been found for the first term.²³ The seven page document, now residing in the collection of Thomas Jefferson's papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society, upon close inspection of the handwriting, appears to be in Jefferson's own hand. At the beginning of each legislative session, Jefferson made two lists, each including the name of every senator and congressman serving that term. The first shows checkmarks next to names of those invited.²⁴ The second recorded that dates that those congressmen attended. Those who declined

an offer had their name crossed from the first guest list and a slash appeared next to their name on the second.²⁵ It appears, however, that most attended a dinner at least once²⁶ and the method of marking a declined offer indicates that it was taken as a personal affront from which one did not easily recover.

The rest of the manuscript recorded the names of those who attended the dinners together. Guests were few in number. In contrast to the large parties given by Washington, Jefferson had frequent dinners, but often only invited between three and fourteen people. These lists, broken by a new date for that particular affair, show the care that Jefferson put into crafting his dinners.²⁷ Margaret Bayard Smith wrote that,

The invitations were not given promiscuously or as had been done of late year, alphabetically, but his guests were generally selected in reference to their tastes, habits and suitability in all respects, which attention had a wonderful effect in making his parties more agreeable, than dinner parties usually are[.]²⁸

Eager to avoid outbreaks of conflict at table, he never invited people of opposing political parties.

Jefferson invited people to dine together because he knew that they enjoyed each other's company or because they worked closely together and needed to talk of political matters after dinner. In April of 1805, Vice President James Madison and Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin both dined at the President's House three times in one week.²⁹ In fact, it appears that throughout the years the two often found themselves together in Jefferson's dining room and they were such frequent guests that Jefferson made his own shorthand for their names, Mad. and Gall., respectively.

When choosing dinner guests, he did not always think of politics, but also thought of those with whom he wished to converse, even if they were not members of Congress. Benjamin Henry Latrobe also appears numerous times in this list, even during Congressional sessions when

Jefferson normally reserved his table for members of Congress. As the architect of the United States Capitol, Jefferson and his guests would have found Latrobe's contribution to their conversations most interesting. One of Jefferson's greatest loves was European architecture, the architect would have been able to give them updates on the construction of the Capitol as well as engage in conversations about the great buildings of Europe that Jefferson had studied while abroad. Jefferson chose dinner guests such as Latrobe because he wanted to enjoy himself as much as his guests enjoyed themselves. This would be impossible, however, if the household did not run smoothly at meal times; thus, Jefferson found and trained the best staff possible in order to make entertaining possible.

Knowing that a well-ordered house was necessary to the success of his lavish dinner parties, Thomas Jefferson took a personal interest in selecting and overseeing his staff. However, with affairs of state to attend to, Jefferson needed a *maître d'hôtel* he trusted to share this responsibility with him. The first *maître d'* to serve at the President's House, Joseph Rapin, lasted less than a year.³⁰ When he wanted to leave Jefferson's employment, the President needed to find a replacement. He wrote to the French envoy, Philippe de Létombe, to ask for his help saying,

you know the importance of a good maître d'hôtel, in a large house, & the impossibility of finding one among the natives of our country. . . . Honesty & skill in making the dessert are indispen[sable] qualifications. . . . I have a good cook: but it is pour l'office, & to take charge of the family that I am distressed³¹

Jefferson seemed desperate to replace Rapin immediately, and as luck would have it, Létombe had a suggestion and helped negotiate the deal. The French envoy suggested the Frenchman Étienne Lemaire to take the position for a salary of thirty dollar a month, a high salary at the time.³² Lemaire served Jefferson for the remainder of his two terms. Though very little is known of him personally, he spoke and wrote mostly French and, according to all accounts, ran

the household with great skill.³³ Aside from supplying the kitchen with fresh supplies from the Georgetown market every morning, his duties included overseeing the other servants of the household. Jefferson's account books also list the wages of scullions and a number of women whose jobs remain unknown, though they likely did laundry, cleaned, or worked in the kitchen.³⁴ He also rented a slave from a Virginia family just across the Potomac; called John, at least by Jefferson, his main activities included caring for the hall and dining room and serving at table.³⁵ At the end of his second term, his overseer Edmund Bacon recalled that the staff consisted of,

eleven servants with him from Monticello. He had a French cook in Washington named Julien, and he took Eda and Fanny there to learn French cookery. He always preferred French cookery. Eda and Fanny were afterwards his cooks at Monticello.³⁶

Knowing that he could not afford to employ a large staff in his retirement, especially a French cook, he brought two of his slaves to the President House, Edith Hern Fossett and Fanny Gillette Fossett, to learn from his French chef, Honoré Julien.³⁷ Though Jefferson had desired James Hemings to return to his employment, Julien proved an able chef during his eight years in Washington, just as he had when he served as chef to George Washington in Philadelphia.³⁸ Létombe suggested that the President employ Julien for twenty-five dollars a month.³⁹ Though Jefferson enjoyed the return to French cuisine and his chef's ability to provide his favorite dishes, he had one qualm with the Julien's abilities. The chef had trouble blending a certain amount of plain Virginia cooking with French cuisine. The President wrote to Martha in 1802, "pray enable yourself to direct us here how to make muffins in Peter's method. my cook here cannot succeed at all in them, and they are a great luxury to me."⁴⁰ Though Peter Hemings never served Jefferson in the White House kitchen, he remained at Monticello and Jefferson clearly saw his superiority in making some items, such as muffins. Though he loved French cuisine, some items of Virginia fare were still superior in his eyes.

Though no records exist of the kitchen tools at his disposal, there is little doubt that Julien had adequate supplies, whether they came with the chef from Philadelphia or from the copious supplies in the Monticello kitchen. What is certain, however, is that Julien's kitchen in the President's House had an iron range that burned coal.⁴¹ Though quite the fashion in Paris, they were a rarity in America at the time.⁴² They allowed for better temperature control and the use of different cooking methods at the same time, including baking, boiling, and frying.

Though the kitchen was probably well equipped upon arrival, the dining room certainly was not. The money appropriated by Congress for the furnishing of the President's House did not cover the needed articles in the dining room. Initially, Jefferson estimated that four thousand dollars of the budget would be enough to outfit the house, but he later realized that the budget could not cover the necessary items. Lemaire made a list of everything needed for the dining room: six tablecloths, blue porcelain place settings for twenty-five, tea and coffee cups for thirty, four dozen beer glasses, two dozen punch glasses, two dozen wine glasses, three dozen forks and spoons, and three dozen dessert forks and spoons.⁴³ Jefferson wrote to Gouverneur Morris, a New York Senator, that, "Terrines, casseroles, dishes, are the articles most desirable, forks & spoons the least so, because we have enough of them."⁴⁴ The Senator offered his personal set to the President to use during his term in office.⁴⁵

Outfitting the kitchen and a dining room in a city that was far from finished was not Jefferson's only problem. At the time, the city of Washington proper did not have its own market. Thus, Lemaire frequented the market in Georgetown.⁴⁶ As the President's House did not have its own extensive vegetable garden, Lemaire needed to shop for fresh supplies every morning.⁴⁷ Edmund Bacon recounted his experience of this daily affair, recalling that the first job,

[I]n the morning there, was to go to market. There was no market then in Washington. Mr. Jefferson's steward was a Frenchman named Lamar. He was a very smart man, was well educated, and as much of a gentleman in his appearance as any man. . . . [the coachman] would get out the wagon early in the morning, and Lamar would go with him to Georgetown to market. I have all my life been in the habit of getting up about four o'clock in the morning, and I went with them very often. Lamar told me that it often took fifty dollars to pay for what marketing they would use in a day. Mr. Jefferson's salary did not support him while he was President.⁴⁸

Based upon other accounts left by Jefferson himself, the estimate of fifty dollars a day seems quite accurate. When placed beside the monthly wages for Lemaire and Julien, thirty and twenty-five dollars, respectively, their salaries seem like a pittance. In his first year in office alone, Jefferson spent \$2003.71 on groceries and \$2797.84 in wine apart from the daily expense of shopping for meat and vegetables at the market.⁴⁹ When compared to the \$89.11 spent on groceries, and \$186 spent at the market during a three-month period in Philadelphia in 1792,⁵⁰ the increase in expenses must have been attributable to the cost of entertaining. With a salary of only \$25,000 a year for all expenses of the Presidency, from the salary of his secretary and staff to his own dinners and the other household expenses, no historian disagrees that Jefferson outspent his means for most of his presidency, if not his entire life. One historian has calculated that expenses for this dining room consumed close to three quarters of his presidential salary every year.⁵¹

Though he trusted Lemaire, Jefferson still found the time to check his *maître d'hôtel's* accounts in detail and copy the household expenses into his own account books, just as he had with Petit's accounts in Paris and Philadelphia. His records show how many dozen eggs, and pounds of butter and meat Lemaire purchased every week. He divided consumption by a number ranging from forty to sixty, probably the number of guests that dined there during the week. In one particular week in 1802, the kitchen used forty-two pounds of butter and twenty-eight dozen eggs for the seventy-one people who ate dinner at the President's house, or roughly half pound of

butter per person per meal.⁵² The quantity of butter alone, about average for the accounts of that year, shows the influence of the French style in Julien's cuisine.

With food and wine arriving from the Georgetown market and Georgetown grocer John Barnes, Jefferson found almost everything he could desire on his Table. What he could not find at the market, however, he found other means of acquiring. When he discovered that the market did not have endive, a favorite ingredient in his salads, he found someone to grow it for him personally. He wrote to Robert Bailey, a market gardener who had formerly worked for Jefferson at Monticello.

Would it be within the scope of mr Bailey's plan of gardening for the common market, to make a provision of endive for the ensuing winter, so as to be able to furnish Th:J. with a salad of endive every day through the winter till the spring sallading should commence for which Th:J. would send once a [?]week, and preserve a week's provision here by setting them in earth, to be drawn from day to day fresh, in which way he presumes they would continue good.⁵³

Despite all of the other affairs that Jefferson needed to attend to, correspondence such as this was not unprecedented. He often ordered items such as Virginia hams from Richmond,⁵⁴ but, more importantly took care of wine orders himself, as he always had.

Aside from the expenses for food and provisions, Jefferson spent the largest proportion of his salary on wine orders. Considered one of the expert connoisseurs of the era even before his return from France, but especially after, friends and acquaintances sought his advice on which wines to order and how to order them.⁵⁵ Wine consumption for the President was both a private and public affair. He promoted wine over spirits and the cultivation of vines, while he experimented with viticulture as a personal hobby and enjoyed daily libations from his impressive cellar.⁵⁶ Jefferson purchased close to 20,000 bottles of wine during his eight years in Washington⁵⁷ and spent far more lavishly in his first term than in his second. Though his first pipe of Madeira lasted a little more than three months, he ordered his fourth and fifth pipes of

Madeira wine, each holding about a hundred and sixty gallons apiece, during his second year in office.⁵⁸ The President chose Madeira as a standard wine as much for political reasons as for personal preference, though he did enjoy the wine and drank it throughout his life. After the Revolution it became something of a national drink and symbolized patriotism and independence in the minds of the upper classes of Americans.⁵⁹ His thorough records indicate, however, that he preferred serving champagne in his first term, commonly known by that time as a festive drink.⁶⁰ As with all of his wines, he kept careful records of what wines he had and how much was drunk by the number of guests that had attended. In 1802, a “hamper of Champagne of 50 bottles opened Dec 7 is finished Dec 19 in which time 125 gentlemen have dined, which is 2 bottles for 5 persons,”⁶¹ the President noted.

His records also included all of the wine that he ordered, where he ordered it from, and how much it cost. In a list he labeled “Wine Provided at Washington” he lists thirty-nine different wines from regions comprising five modern day countries: France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Hungary.⁶² In addition to copious quantities of Portuguese Madeira, his choices included some of his favorites from France: champagne, Sauterne, Hermitage, “Margau” [Margeaux], and Burgundy of Chambertin. He ordered very little Burgundy, his favorite, however, because it did not travel well.⁶³ Many wines came from regions of the modern-day Italy, including “Nebioule” [nebbiolo] from the Piedmont region of the north, Chianti, Artemino, and Montepulciano in central Italy, and Syracuse from Sicily. Other wines included different types of sherry, Oeyras from Lisbon, and Hungarian wine.

Though he remained conscious of the price of wine, cost mattered little to him. Wine was something he loved and it helped create an atmosphere of simple refinement and escape from quotidian life in his dining room. Having a large store of wine on hand for this purpose,

however, made keeping the wine a concern for the President. The cellar, or “ice house” as it was called, was an outbuilding connected to the house by a covered walkway. A small structure protected the entrance to a room sixteen feet underground where wine rested on a platform built over blocks of ice covered in sawdust.⁶⁴ The ice served the dual purpose of keeping the wine cold for immediate consumption and keeping it from spoiling in the hot and humid summers on the Potomac.

Every detail that Jefferson attended to, from the icehouse to the dumb-waiters in the dining room, to the iron range in the kitchen, helped make the Table in the White House the greatest display of dining that Jefferson ever achieved in his lifetime. When he had the means and the opportunity, he utilized them to the fullest to create a noteworthy dining experience for his guests. When describing the Table at the President’s House at the time, Margaret Bayard Smith best explained the President’s guests’ views on the experience:

His maître d’hôtel had served in some of the first families abroad and understood his business to perfection. The excellence and superior skill of his French cook was acknowledged by all who frequented his table, for never before had such dinner been given in the President’s House, nor such a variety of the finest and most costly wines. In his entertainments, republican simplicity was united to Epicurean delicacy; while the absence of splendor ornament and profusion was more than compensated by the neatness, order and elegant sufficiency that pervaded the whole establishment.⁶⁵

Jefferson’s Table in this period became a display of the best that he could offer his guests, and he routinely impressed them with his skill at cultivating his interests in wine and cuisine, often importing costly items that Americans had never enjoyed before. He united Republican clarity with the French ideals of entertaining to create a style of leadership that centered on dining. Jefferson’s use of the Table for politics during his Presidency is not a break, but rather a continuation of Jefferson’s Table adapted to fit the situation at hand. As President, Jefferson had many affairs to attend to, but he chose to make the Table a priority. Constantly

torn between his devotion to serving his country and his love of his private life and interests, he found the dining room to be a space in which he could reconcile these two divergent components of his life and, in this setting, enjoy the pleasures of life. In a time where nothing was certain, he made his dining room a refuge to enjoy all of his favorite things: wine from his cellar, exquisite cuisine, a well controlled atmosphere, and, most of all, conversation. Lingered at table allowed him to converse with educated men about his favorite subjects: science, farming, gardening, wine, architecture, and Paris. All of these subjects transcended the call of politics in the partisan city and gave his mind a respite, at least for a little while, from the trials of leading a young nation.

As much a Jefferson loved the Table at the President's House and the means that the Presidential salary provided, by the time he reached the end of his second term in 1809, he was ready to return to Monticello and retire for a final time. What he learned as a young man and in Paris served him well when he became President, but what he learned as President, helped him create a Table in retirement even better suited to his needs. The Table in the President's House was the most impressive he created in his lifetime; if asked, however, Jefferson would have said that he loved the Table in his retirement years better than Paris or the President's House, and in 1809 this was the Table to which he turned his attention.

Chapter VII: A Contented Statesman in Retirement

I have often thought that if heaven had given me choice of my position & calling, it should have been on a rich spot of earth, well watered, and near a good market for the productions of the garden. no occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, & no culture comparable to that of the garden. under total want to demand except for our family table I am still devoted to the garden. but tho' an old man, I am but a young gardener.¹

– Thomas Jefferson to Charles Wilson Peale, August 20, 1811

In a letter to Madame de Corney, dated in 1802, Jefferson wrote of his lifelong internal struggle between his dedication to American government and his love of a tranquil life as a plantation owner:

My strongest predilections are for study, rural occupations & retirement within a small but cherished society. Born, as I unfortunately was, in an age of revolution, my life has been wasted on the billows of the revolutionary storm. The sweet sensations & affections of domestic society have been exchanged with me for the bitter & deadly feuds of party; encircled with political enemies & spies, instead of my children & friends. Time however & the decay of years in now fast advancing that season when it will be seen that I can no longer be of use, even in the eyes of those partial to me: and I shall be permitted to pass through the pains & infirmities of age in the shades of Monticello. And I assure you that, even at this price, I look forward to that retirement with anxious desire.²

When he penned this letter he still had numerous years and trials to weather before he finally got his wish, and stole away to Monticello for the last time. During those eight years, he used the Table to integrate the interests he sought in solitude into a social experience within the context of the demands of his country. Though he enjoyed the Table of the President's House, he felt immense relief that he could finally retire to the peace of Monticello. While he hoped for tranquility for the next seventeen years of his life, from the end of his presidency until he death, he was far from alone. He enjoyed the company of his daughter Martha and her family, including many grandchildren, who helped him run the plantation. A constant throng of visitors arrived at Jefferson's home to meet the great statesman. He organized his home and schedule so that his Table became the forum of social interaction and conversation with these visitors, while

leaving him ample time to find refuge in his interests, especially provisioning the Table and gardening. Though he tried to maintain the standards of excellence that were always a hallmark of his Table, strained finances and other circumstances put some restrictions on the Table during the retirement years. Unwilling to give up his greatest source of enjoyment, Jefferson maintained his Table until the end of his life.

Jefferson designed Monticello to be a sanctuary, a retreat from the problems of the world in which he was free to pursue his interests. However, Monticello was far removed from any major city. This always presented unique problems for Jefferson when trying to provision the Table at Monticello. The problems that he experienced in youth, of having a variety of guests to entertain and creating a dining experience at Monticello never troubled the statesman in his retirement. His lifetime achievements made his company and house a destination for visitors, who came in droves during his seventeen-year retirement. As he craved society for conversation and desired to use his Table as he always had, he organized his life at home around the Table. Though removed from the trials of political life, the Table was still a refuge that provided company with whom he could share his interests in what would otherwise have been a lonely end to his life. This gave him ample opportunity to visit with his guests, but outside meal times, he had time for activities in solitude, especially study, correspondence, and gardening. All of these activities, and almost all of the activities in which Jefferson engaged in his retirement, affected the Table in some way. Study informed his conversation, correspondence brought goods to and from Monticello, and the garden provided the Table with a great variety of fresh fruits and vegetables to create a heightened experience in the dining room that united good food, good wine, and good company.

The best descriptions of dining with Jefferson in his retirement come from the memoirs left by some of his guests: Margaret Bayard Smith, British diplomat Augustus John Foster, future politician Daniel Webster, Massachusetts scholar George Ticknor, and politician's son Francis C. Gray. Their memories of the Table feature prominently in their accounts because Jefferson organized the dining room to be the space in which he interacted with his guests. These accounts also explain how Jefferson organized the Table in retirement, the topics of conversation he wanted to discuss, and the types of food and wine served and how they compared to styles prevalent in Virginia at the time.

Meals and meal times were sacrosanct in the Jefferson home. Breakfast began promptly at eight or nine, depending on the season.³ Francis Gray remembered that a gong sounded at a quarter past eight, probably the Chinese gong Jefferson had ordered nearly two decades before, and a second sounded at nine when all assembled in the dining room.⁴ The family and guests dined on tea, coffee, and bread fresh from the oven, sometimes accompanied by cold meat.⁵ This typical Monticello breakfast, with the exception of the cold meat, probably a ham or leftovers from the previous night, differed little from the breakfast that Jefferson enjoyed in Paris and Philadelphia.⁶ Margaret Bayard Smith, however, found a scene that differed from other accounts.

Our breakfast table was as large as our dinner table; instead of a cloth, a folded napkin lay under each plate; we had tea, coffee, excellent muffins, hot wheat and corn bread, cold ham & butter. – It was not exactly the virginian breakfast I expected. – here indeed was the mode of living in general that of a Virginia planter – At breakfast the family all assembled, all Mrs R's children eat at the family table, but are in such excellent order, that you would not know if you did not see them that a child was present.⁷

This array shows items specific to Monticello cooking, including the famous muffins that Jefferson loved and asked for in Washington, even when he had a French chef. Jefferson also incorporated another element of his own style into dining at Monticello. In a large household,

children did not often eat with the family when guests were present. Jefferson, however, almost always had guests and found his family to be his greatest comfort. He wanted these children to surround him and learn the art of conversation as he had, at a table of intellectuals. Even after breakfast, it was customary to linger talking for about an hour. After the breakfast hour, however, the day's work began. Mrs. Randolph and her daughters turned to the household activities and Jefferson to his garden, reading, writing, and his morning ride. Guests were left to amuse themselves until dinner, walking the grounds or reading from Jefferson's voluminous library.⁸

When guests returned to the dining room for the dinner, always served promptly at four o'clock, they found a bountiful feast spread on the table.⁹ Jefferson returned from his ride and dressed for dinner, which placed a sense of formality on the meal.¹⁰ According to Isaac Jefferson, a slave who lived his youth at Monticello during the retirement years, Jefferson never had less than eight "covers," or prepared dishes, and often had as many as thirty-two.¹¹

At a typical Virginia dinner among the gentry, diners would have entered the room to see the table set in the French style, though a round table was not a universal. Plates, forks, knives, and spoons lay across the edge of the table as they would today, but the soup bowls remained beside the hostess. Each setting would have been accompanied by a number of glasses for the appropriate beverages. In the Virginia style, hosts offered quite an array, from milk, coffee, and tea, to beer, wine, and cider.¹² The two main dishes would have been placed at either end of the table or near the host and hostess who would serve. Guests passed plates around the table to be served by fellow diners nearest the other dishes they desired to sample.¹³

The fare on Jefferson's table also seems to differ somewhat from the typical Virginia cuisine, a mark of the influence that culture in Europe had upon his eating habits. Though he

shared the habit of serving Virginia ham at his table quite often, it was never his favorite, according to overseer Edmund Bacon.¹⁴ He served it, however, because he understood its place in the culture of Virginia. Ham, however, was never the only main dish, neither at his table nor in Virginia. Another cut of meat such as beef or lamb, or perhaps fowl graced the table as well.¹⁵ Edmund Bacon said of his employer,

He was never a great eater, but what he did eat he wanted to be very choice. He never eat much hog-meat. . . . I knew mighty well what suited him. He was especially fond of Guinea fowls; and for meat he preferred good beef, mutton, and lambs.¹⁶

Though Jefferson did not prefer meat, he served it because it conformed to the conventions of every cuisine, from the French to the Virginian, that a large cut of meat form the center of the main course. Jefferson, however, preferred vegetables. Like most colonists, Jefferson did not follow his English ancestors in their contempt of vegetables. For the former President, raising vegetables and eating the fruits of his labor became one of his greatest passions, and his Table became his greatest medium for sharing that passion. He could show his guests the long rows of vegetables in the kitchen gardens, and could introduce them to the wide variety and great quality of its products in the dishes that appeared on the table. Such dishes also provided topics of conversation surrounding botany and cuisine. Food and flavor melded practical interests with intellectual ones. Many guests noted this custom. Margaret Bayard Smith remembered that,

The table was plainly, but genteelly & plentifully spread & his immense & costly variety of french & Italian wines, gave place to Madeira & a sweet ladies wine. . . . We sat till near sun down at the table, where the dessert was succeeded by agreeable & instructive conversation, in which everyone seemed to wish & expect Mr. J. to take the chief part. . . . he prolongs that meal, rather the time after that meal & seems to relish his wine the better, for being accompanied with conversation.¹⁷

Of all accounts, Smith is the only one to mention the customary dessert course in retirement. The recipes saved by Jefferson's granddaughter from Monticello, however, included a great number of pies, cakes, cookies, and creams.

Smith's account, when compared to others, also shows the changes in Jefferson's style that happened during his retirement, mostly for financial reasons. Smith visited Jefferson in 1809 just after his final term ended. At this time, Jefferson still had copious quantities of wine left from his presidency and was not yet as pressed for cash as he would become in later years. Here Smith notes that they drank wine both with dinner and after dinner, just as Jefferson had in Washington. Accounts from just a few years later show that Jefferson served wines only after the cloth was cleared, and he served beer and cider during the meal instead. Though this had long been the fashion in Virginia and in America as a whole, it was not the French style that Jefferson chose to emulate whenever possible. Cutting back on wine purchases and saving the quality beverages for after dinner would have saved in expenses while keeping the table within the fashions of the time. Class-conscious in such matters, maintaining appearances would have been a priority.

The most complete description of wine consumption comes from Daniel Webster's account:

He has a strong preference for the wines of the continent, of which he has many sorts of excellent quality, having been more than commonly successful in his mode of importing and preserving them. Among others, we found the following, which are very rare in this country, and apparently not at all injured by transportation: L'Ednau, Muscat, Samian, Blanchette de Limoux. Dinner is served in half Virginian, half French style, in good taste and abundance. No wine is put on the table till the cloth is removed.¹⁸

Other guests concurred that wine, though of high quality, was only served after the table was cleared, and was often accompanied by conversation of equal quality. Though his style altered due to finances, the importance and subject of conversations never did:

The dinner was always choice, and served in the French style; but no wine was set on the table till the cloth was removed. The ladies sat until about six, then retired, but returned with the tea-tray a little before seven, and spent the evening with the gentlemen; which was always pleasant, for they are obviously accustomed to join in the conversation, however high the topic may be.¹⁹

In conversation, Mr. Jefferson is easy and natural, and apparently not ambitious; it is not loud, as challenging general attention, but usually addressed to the person next to him. The topic, when not selected to suit the character and feelings of his auditor, are those subjects with which his mind seems particularly occupied; and these, at present, may be said to be science and letters, and especially the University of Virginia.²⁰

He has the same discursive manner and love of paradox with the same appearance of sobriety and cool reason. He seems equally fond of American antiquities, and especially the antiquities of his native State, and talks of them with freedom and I suppose, accuracy.²¹

Jefferson seemed to enjoy these conversations, talking of the things that he loved most.

He would sit for hours, guests remembered. This was his favorite form of society, and, as he had in the President's House, he desired to create an atmosphere of intimacy in which conversation could flow without fear of being overheard.

The design for the dining room reflected Jefferson's desire for privacy as well as convenience. When building or renovating Monticello, the dining room always took precedence, because lingering at table was a favorite pastime and he wanted a comfortable space in which to do so.²² Upon retirement he added a set of revolving shelves, similar to those he installed in the President's house, in the wall that could bring dishes in and out of the room without servants entering.²³ The mantelpiece also contained a dumbwaiter system on either side to conveniently bring bottles up from the cellar directly below.²⁴ Though his conversations dealt little with affairs of state, he still cherished the uninterrupted chatter and had no desire to change his way of dining. With large numbers of guests, that may not have always been possible. His tax statement in Albemarle County noted that among his taxable items were eight separate parts of dining tables.²⁵ If there were as many as twelve family members plus guests, present at meals,

Jefferson must have owned a table with removable leaves that could be adjusted to fit the size of the party, instead of keeping a round table.

Despite all of the time and energy that Jefferson put into his interests, he could not run Monticello alone. Though he recorded and understood the running of the household, he was still a man and member of the Virginia gentry, and, as such, felt that women had their place to play in the system of household organization. Especially in his retirement, as well as before, he relied on his daughter Martha to help him run the house. The only Jefferson child to survive her father, Martha took over the running of Monticello after her father's retirement. Running a plantation home was, nonetheless, not a task Martha Jefferson Randolph enjoyed. She had been raised in Paris and had no domestic training; in fact, she married before she learned to manage a household.²⁶ Her responsibilities would have included overseeing the kitchen, controlling the store cupboards, and accounting for the foods consumed.²⁷ Desirous that her daughters should not suffer the same fate as she, Martha ensured that they were properly trained to run the household.²⁸ The girls rotated taking the unpopular job of "carrying the keys" to the cellar and storage room, meaning that they had to run the household, essentially serving as *maître d'hôtel*.²⁹ Anne Cary Randolph left an account book of her duties at Monticello, written in the same book that her grandmother, Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson, used as her own account book more than thirty years before.³⁰ She, like her mother and grandmother before her, traded with Monticello slaves for fruit, vegetables, eggs, chickens, fish, and other foodstuffs that the slaves grew or tended in their spare time.³¹

The women of Monticello also ensured that the kitchen ran smoothly. Edith and Fanny, the two cooks trained by the French chef in the President's House, cooked the fare that Jefferson remembered from Paris. While Thomas Jefferson enjoyed good food and wine, he knew very

little about cooking. Thus he left the affairs of the kitchen to the women in the house, his daughter and granddaughters. Martha Jefferson Randolph required that each of her daughters keep a cookbook, and one such book left by Virginia Randolph contains many recipes attributed to Monticello or those who worked for Jefferson at some point in his life. They are the best evidence of what was served at Jefferson's table and the influences of other cultures upon it. In addition to the recipes for ham prepared a number of ways, many are attributed to Lemaire, including recipes for beef, mutton, and pancakes.³² Many desserts, including creams and snow eggs came from James Hemings' repertoire.³³ Of those recipes attributed to "Monticello," one finds the most interesting mix of cultures. The okra soup shows the influence of slave culture on southern dining while the recipes for polenta and macaroni demonstrate some influence from Jefferson's trip to Lombardy.³⁴ Though somewhat different from standard Virginia fare, the recipes are not overly complicated. Some of the sauces do require some training and if Jefferson was entertaining, as he almost always was, the staff in the kitchen would have spent many hours preparing his daily meals, and it would have consumed much of Martha's and her daughters' time as well. Jefferson always maintained this interest in incorporating foods from different countries into his menu, and they were usually accompanied by an array of European wines.

Jefferson returned from the President's House with a great quantity and variety of superb wines. With the substantial amount of entertaining that Jefferson did in retirement, however, the store was eventually depleted, and his financial situation often dictated what he could spend to restore his cellar. Early in his retirement, he arranged for pipes of wine to be delivered annually, but this practice did not continue for long.³⁵ In fact, though he still purchased cider by the cask for his table, he experimented in making his own libations again.³⁶ Once again he tried to grow vines and produce his own vintage at Monticello; no records indicate that he ever succeeded.³⁷

His desire to manufacture everything that his estate required became even more pronounced during the War of 1812.³⁸ He believed that,

we must endeavor to make every thing we want within ourselves, and have as little intercourse as possible with Europe in it's present demoralised state. wine being among the earliest luxuries in which we indulge ourselves, it is desirable that it should be made here, and we have every soil, aspect & climate of the best wine countries.³⁹

The reluctance and the inability to get wine supplies from Europe, as well as his strained finances, may account for the small amounts of wine purchased during the years of the war.

Instead, Jefferson made an increased effort to bottle all his own wine. He made notes on the bottling supplies that he had and how much beer and cider he had on hand to fill them.⁴⁰ When he did not have enough bottles or corks, he ordered them.⁴¹ When brewing a year's supply of strong malt beer, he realized he would need to order more than ten dozen jugs to store the amount produced.⁴²

When the war ended, however, he returned to the one luxury he could not live without, wine. He wrote to Stephen Cathalan, from whom he had ordered wine since he first arrived in France, "I resume our old correspondence with a declaration of wants. the fine wines of your region are not forgotten, nor the friend thro' whom I used to obtain them," and the most important wines were white Hermitage and red wine from Nice.⁴³ He also ordered casks of sherry or Lisbon wines, but gone were the expensive Bordeaux and Champagne of the President's House.⁴⁴ Though at the point of almost total financial ruin, the state of the cellar could not be ignored.⁴⁵ Wine was a necessity, and a necessity that needed to be fulfilled. It was one item that, try as he might, Jefferson could never produce for himself.

In his retirement, Jefferson continued his endeavors to make Monticello self-sufficient, but as with wine, there were some items he found impossible to produce on his estate.

His most common grocery order contained sugar by the barrel (brown and white), coffee, tea, chocolate, cheese, rice, salt, and spirits, often French brandy or rum.⁴⁶ Though he once estimated that the house used a pound of coffee, a pound of white sugar, and two pounds of brown sugar a day, he spent far less on groceries in his retirement, for example, only \$80.98 for the first quarter of 1822, than during his presidency.⁴⁷ He also occasionally ordered spices such as cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, and allspice. Other routine purchases for the table included raisins, currants, mustard, syrup for punch, and molasses. At the time, an order for vanilla would have been a rare request, and he once mentioned that Petit had trouble finding it in Philadelphia.⁴⁸ It was a flavor that Jefferson enjoyed, especially in ice cream, a recipe he brought back from France. He also ordered macaroni until the year he died, as much as a hundred pounds at a time.⁴⁹ Despite buying a macaroni mold, he clearly never succeeded in making his own at Monticello, probably because he lacked the necessary semolina flour from the hard durum wheat grown in Southern Italy.

To procure the items for his Table that he could not produce or get locally, Jefferson continued his “Jeffersonian Exchange” by corresponding with old acquaintances and friends to acquire the novelties he wanted to add to his garden. So, too, did his correspondence include sending his associates seeds from the varieties in his garden. Ellen Wayles Randolph Coolidge recalled that her grandfather, “kept up a correspondence with persons in large cities, particularly, I think, in Philadelphia, for the purpose of receiving supplies of roots and seeds both for his kitchen and flower garden.”⁵⁰ This Philadelphia merchant, named Bernard McMahan, became a constant correspondent of Jefferson’s, and the two exchanged letters and seeds for multiple years.⁵¹ In addition to the common garden seeds, Jefferson also desired seeds for novel plants. Tomatoes first appeared in his calendar in 1809 and he asked an acquaintance for all of the

tomato seeds that he had.⁵² People at the time still considered tomatoes to be poisonous, but Jefferson embraced the addition to his table. He also experimented with sesame seeds, and acquired a seed press so that he could gather their oil.⁵³ He wanted to find a replacement for olive oil on his salads, which he loved, but found expensive and difficult to transport to Monticello. He tried to grow numerous olive trees over the years, but none of them flourished.

Though Jefferson never achieved a self-sufficient Monticello, the garden was the closest he came.⁵⁴ The garden was Jefferson's first and last love and it always provided him with an outlet for his stress during his life.⁵⁵ "[T]he total change of occupation from the house & writing table to constant employment in the garden & farm has added wonderfully to my happiness,"⁵⁶ he told his former grocer in Georgetown, John Barnes. "He loved farming and gardening," wrote Ellen Wayles Randolph Coolidge of her grandfather, "the fields, the orchards, and his asparagus beds. Every day he rode through his plantation and walked in his garden. In the cultivation of the last he took great pleasure."⁵⁷ Part of the joy he found in this occupation lay in his ability to share it with his grandchildren, whom he adored. Ellen's younger sister Virginia recalled these hours with her grandfather fondly.

When he walked in the garden and would call the children to go with him, we raced after and before him, and we were made perfectly happy by this permission to accompany him. . . . He would gather fruit for us, seek out the ripest figs, or bring down the cherries from on high above our heads with a long stick, at the end of which there was a hood and little net bag.⁵⁸

He walked through these gardens and the orchard daily to inspect the progress of his hundreds of plants and trees. Under his diligent attention, the garden in his early years of retirement grew to the largest and most varied in his life. At its greatest, the kitchen garden had over three hundred varieties of ninety-nine species of vegetables.⁵⁹

Even in his last years, he cultivated his garden and recorded its progress with the same care and attention as he had in his youth. In fact, his records became even more detailed. During the eight years that he lived in Washington, he kept a chart of the vegetables found in the Georgetown market. The list included lettuce, parsley, spinach, sprouts, radishes, peas, strawberries, and many others, noting the earliest and latest annual appearance of each and that he could always find cabbage and potatoes.⁶⁰ When he returned to Monticello, he made a chart of everything he planted in his garden, when it was planted, where he planted it, when it came to table, when it was gone, and, in a miscellaneous category, if it failed.⁶¹ Jefferson made a chart in his memoranda book about the expected volume of winter vegetables the family table required: ten bushels of turnips, three bushels of carrots, two bushels of beets, and two bushels of parsnips.⁶² Of particular importance in this record keeping was the first harvest of peas—a cause for celebration. It became a tradition among Jefferson's extended family that the first in Albemarle County to harvest a patch of peas hosted a feast with the spring vegetable as a main part of the meal.⁶³ Despite his great successes with varieties of peas, his experiments in varieties of other plants did not always end in a bountiful harvest. In fact, he probably failed as often as he succeeded, but always an optimist, Jefferson persevered when experiments failed.⁶⁴

Jefferson's limitless optimism in the experiments in his garden and his unwavering commitment to his interests and Table kept him grounded until the end of his life. Though financial difficulties, mostly caused by reckless spending to satisfy his passions, left him struggling to maintain his standards, he continued to entertain until the end. He developed his Table over a lifetime and found escape in the interests that helped him enhance the performance of his Table. In his retirement he adapted it once again to fit his needs, this time providing an escape, a space for society and conversation and a forum to display his interests, especially the

products of his garden. Though the retirement Table was not the grandest display of food and wine that Jefferson created, if asked, Jefferson would have said it was his favorite. It was a place in which he could enjoy his family, friends, and conversation with food from his garden and wine from his favorite places, totally at ease and unbothered by affairs of political life. Though he worked over a lifetime to develop his interests, he probably would never have called himself an expert, but rather a lifelong apprentice, an amateur at best.⁶⁵ But, just as the root of the word amateur comes from the word for love, so too did Jefferson's interests come from an innate passion that grew as he aged.

Chapter VIII: Conclusion

“Nothing is troublesome that we do willingly”¹

– Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson’s Ten Rules

A mere nine days before his death, Thomas Jefferson, too weak to write the letter himself, dictated his instructions about a wine order he placed months before.

Monticello June 25. 26

Dear Sir,

I have had no information from Dodge & Oxnard but of the time of shipping the wine, the vessel and port. The papers the collector was so kind as to send, never came to my hand, but as he ascertained the duty &c. I have this day desired Colo Peyton to remit him 18. And I will give you the further trouble of requesting him to ship the wines to Peyton’s address who will pay all charges. I salute you with great affection and respect.

Th: Jefferson²

So dedicated to his interests, not even failing health could keep him from trying to procure the very best. Though his interests took a considerable amount of energy in his last years, especially as his health began to fade, he never found them troublesome, because he continued them willingly, even though his vigor of body could not keep up with his strength of his heart. His first passions were also his last. Jefferson continued to write in his garden book until 1824, the same year that he paid for one of his last wine orders, just after the Marquis de Lafayette visited him at Monticello, probably depleting the last of his stock.³ This order of five cases of fifty bottles each and thirty gallons of table wine arrived in the first days of the 1825.⁴ A similar order in June of 1825, which arrived from Marseilles in February 1826 with oil, anchovies, and macaroni, was indeed the last to arrive.⁵ Even though expensive wine orders became infrequent in his last years, Jefferson still spent far beyond his means at the end of his life, just as he always had. In fact, his constant spending to satisfy his interests led to the destruction of the vestiges of

a life he worked tirelessly to build. Jefferson died so deeply in debt that his daughter Martha had to sell Monticello, and the estate that Jefferson constructed for his family fell to the hands of others.

Though the unfortunate fate of his beloved home would have devastated Jefferson had he lived to see it, his dream for the house, and the dream for his Table, survived him. The records that Jefferson tirelessly kept throughout his life help historians study Jefferson's interests and reconstruct them by Jefferson's design. The Thomas Jefferson Foundation returned the house and grounds to its former glory of the retirement years. Renewed interest in past decades spurred further research into the architecture and grounds, especially the garden. Historians at Princeton and Monticello continue to assemble Jefferson's papers into an authoritative collection. The restored kitchen garden at Monticello is a testament to the archival and archeological work done to investigate Thomas Jefferson's life that extends far beyond the political realm. The study of Jefferson's many interests, however, seems incomplete without a study of how they fit together, and there is no better forum for this endeavor than the place in which they melded into a single experience – the dining room.

Thomas Jefferson believed that dining should be an experience of an artful display of excellent food and wine shared by a group of equals engaged in enlightened conversation. During every stage of Jefferson's life, his dining room became the space dedicated to his Table, his philosophy of dining and the experience that it inspired. The Table, however, changed over the years, dictated by circumstance and informed by experience. From his earliest years, Jefferson found himself at table in the company of equals and mentors who taught him that to entertain was an art form. From Shadwell and Williamsburg to Paris and the President's House, he learned at the tables of others and put his wealth of knowledge to use at his own Table, taking

a special delight in sharing this knowledge with others. Despite many obstacles, Thomas Jefferson always labored to create a heightened experience of dining for himself and for his guests, using the Table as the means for which his current circumstance required. As he matured, he grew to have an increasingly refined sense of how his endeavors and the cultivation of his interests in the Table enriched his life. He found refuge in the dining room and he cultivated his interests as an escape from the world around him. The Table became an integral part of his personality and remains an ideal forum in which to study a complex man with seemingly divergent interests.

Joseph Ellis described the “many chambered personality” of Thomas Jefferson in the preface to *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson*.⁶ If studying Jefferson’s personality through his Table, Ellis’ interpretation may prove inadequate, but so too, in a way, was Ellis absolutely right. Jefferson’s interests in life were not separated, but rather they were unbreakably linked within his philosophy and experience called the Table. But while the Table seems to be integrated on the surface, on a much deeper philosophical level, the Table detached itself from the world of reality. Jefferson’s Table offered an escape from the world, a refuge in which to find solace in the interests he cultivated to distract him from less pleasant endeavors. To withdraw, at least for a few hours, from the relentless frenzy of politics where rumor and backstage dealings thwarted republican ideals of equality and truth, gave Jefferson a sense of detachment from his cares.

Jefferson desperately craved this escape. The great statesman who wrote the Declaration of Independence, always consumed by self-doubt and a feeling of inadequacy, felt that he finished his political career marred by failure. Just as public life gave Jefferson a sense of defeat, his torrid personal life created an aura of overwhelming sadness. The loss of his wife and

numerous children, constant financial difficulties, and rumors concerning his relationship with Sally Hemings that became public knowledge late in his career, troubled him deeply. To combat this sorrow, Jefferson carved out a corner of his life to enjoy the simple pleasures of good food, wine, company, and conversation. In this space he took refuge from his problems, maintaining control of this forum not for the sake of control itself, but to ensure that the dining room remained a haven in which he felt at ease and unencumbered by the worries of life. Thus, the Table remained a constant and stabilizing force because it was his well-designed escape, like a garden in the middle of a desert.

Jefferson would doubtless have read in Voltaire's prescription for life at the end of *Candide*,⁷ "*mais il faut cultiver notre jardin*" ("but we must cultivate our garden").⁸ This prescription would have resounded with Jefferson. The Stoics said that the task of philosophy is to discover what lies within one's power and what lies beyond it.⁹ Life may be akin to a desert, but in a corner, one can cultivate a garden.¹⁰ In a life that never turned out as he expected, Jefferson detached himself from what he could not control to cultivate his own patch of earth. To enhance his enjoyment of this endeavor, however, he created much more than a garden, he extended this interest to make dining an experience, refining his sense of what he wanted and cultivating friendships by inviting others to share in his refuge. Thomas Jefferson fused his first love of the rich earth with its bounty of fruits, and the minds nourished by it, to create something that brought him abundant joy – his Table.

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- ³⁷ Stanton, 187.
- ³⁸ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. xxxiii, 38; Stanton, 187.
- ³⁹ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. xxxiii, 97-98, 450.
- ⁴⁰ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. xxxviii, 623; Stanton, 187.
- ⁴¹ Seale, 100.
- ⁴² Seale, 100.
- ⁴³ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. xxxvii, 508-509.
- ⁴⁴ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. xxxiv, 64.
- ⁴⁵ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. xxxiv, 151.
- ⁴⁶ The location of the Georgetown market in the early nineteenth century was situated in the same location as the current Dean & DeLuca market at 3276 M Street, N.W.
- ⁴⁷ Seale, 100.
- ⁴⁸ Bacon, in *Thomas Jefferson in his Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of His Life Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates*, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, 176.
- ⁴⁹ Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, vol. ii, 1067.
- ⁵⁰ Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, vol. ii, 885.
- ⁵¹ Hailman, 259.
- ⁵² Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, vol. i, 1089.
- ⁵³ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. xxxvii, 100.
- ⁵⁴ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. xxxiv, 18.
- ⁵⁵ James M. Gabler, "Jefferson and Wine: A 'Necessity of Life,'" in *Dining At Monticello: In Good Taste and Abundance*, edited by Damon L. Fowler, [Chapel Hill, NC: Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc., 2005], 81.
- ⁵⁶ Pinney, 126; Hailman, 256.
- ⁵⁷ Gabler, "Jefferson and Wine: A 'Necessity of Life,'" in *Dining At Monticello: In Good Taste and Abundance*, edited by Damon L. Fowler, [Chapel Hill, NC: Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc., 2005], 200.
- ⁵⁸ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. xxxvi, 163; Hailman, 259; Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, vol. ii, 1057.
- ⁵⁹ Hailman, 266.
- ⁶⁰ Hailman, 270.
- ⁶¹ Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, vol. ii, 1089.
- ⁶² Hailman, 266; Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, vol. ii, 1115-1117.
- ⁶³ Gabler, "Jefferson and Wine: A 'Necessity of Life,'" in *Dining At Monticello: In Good Taste and Abundance*, edited by Damon L. Fowler, 200.
- ⁶⁴ Hailman, 286.
- ⁶⁵ Smith, 391-392.

Chapter VII: A Contented Statesman in Retirement

¹ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. iv, 93.

² Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. xxxvii, 309-310.

³ Augustus John Foster, in *Visitors To Monticello*, edited by Merrill D. Peterson, [Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1989], 39.

⁴ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. viii, 235; Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. xxiv, 616.

⁵ Daniel Webster, in *Jefferson In His Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of His Life Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates*, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, [Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012], 95.

⁶ Carson, 8.

⁷ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. i, 389.

⁸ Augustus John Foster, in *Visitors To Monticello*, edited by Merrill D. Peterson, 39.

⁹ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. i, 389.

¹⁰ John Edwards Caldwell, in *Jefferson In His Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of His Life Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates*, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, [Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012], 63.

¹¹ Marshall W. Fishwick, "The Savant As Gourmet." *Journal of Popular Culture* 32, no. 1 [1998]: 55.

¹² Carson, 5.

¹³ Carson, 5.

¹⁴ Bacon, in *Thomas Jefferson in his Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of His Life Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates*, 170.

¹⁵ Carson, 5.

¹⁶ Bacon in *Thomas Jefferson in his Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of His Life Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates*, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, 171.

¹⁷ Margaret Bayard Smith, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. i, 387.

¹⁸ Daniel Webster, in *Jefferson In His Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of His Life Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates*, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, [Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012], 95.

¹⁹ George Ticknor, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. viii, 241.

²⁰ Daniel Webster, in *Jefferson In His Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of His Life Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates*, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, 94.

²¹ Ticknor, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. viii, 239.

²² Howard, 31.

²³ William H. Adams, *Jefferson's Monticello*, [New York: Abbeville Press, 1983], 113.

²⁴ William H. Adams, *Jefferson's Monticello*, 113.

²⁵ Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. viii, 392-393.

²⁶ Elizabeth V. Chew, "Carrying the Keys: Women and Housekeeping at Monticello," in *Dining At Monticello: 'In Good Taste and Abundance,'* edited by Damon Fowler, [Chapel Hill, NC: Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc., 2005], 30-31.

²⁷ Chew, in *Dining At Monticello: 'In Good Taste and Abundance,'* 31.

²⁸ Scharff, 325.

²⁹ Sarafin, in *Dining At Monticello: 'In Good Taste and Abundance,'* edited by Damon Fowler, 22; Scharff 337.

³⁰ Scharff, 325.

- ³¹ Anne Cary Randolph, "Part A: Household Accounts," *The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series 7: Miscellaneous Bound Volumes*, [Library of Congress, Washington, DC].
- ³² Kimball, 69, 65, 103.
- ³³ Kimball, 105.
- ³⁴ Kimball, 45, 80.
- ³⁵ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. iii, 505.
- ³⁶ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. iv, 210; Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, vol. ii, 1392.
- ³⁷ Pinney, 127, 129; Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, vol. ii, 1321.
- ³⁸ Hailman, 324.
- ³⁹ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. iv, 176-177.
- ⁴⁰ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. viii, 11-12.
- ⁴¹ Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, vol. ii, 1318; Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. vii, 155, 710.
- ⁴² Hailman, 331; Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. vii, 712.
- ⁴³ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. viii, 571.
- ⁴⁴ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. viii, 662.
- ⁴⁵ Hailman, 321.
- ⁴⁶ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. i, 44-45; vol. vii, 180; vol. i, 368.
- ⁴⁷ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. viii, 30; Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, vol. ii, 1385.
- ⁴⁸ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. i, 161.
- ⁴⁹ Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, vol. ii, 1826.
- ⁵⁰ Ellen Wayles Randolph Coolidge, in *Jefferson In His Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of His Life Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates*, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, [Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012], 152.
- ⁵¹ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. ii, 544.
- ⁵² Thomas Jefferson, *Thomas Jefferson's Garden Book*, 390-391; Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. vii, 332.
- ⁵³ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. iv, 7.
- ⁵⁴ Richard L. Williams, "Atop a 'little mountain' in Virginia, Jefferson cultivated his botanical bent," *Smithsonian* 15, no. 4 [July 1984]: 72.
- ⁵⁵ Kristen Hinman, "Thomas Jefferson: Founding Foodie," *American History* 46, no. 1, [April 2011]: 48.
- ⁵⁶ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. i, 166.
- ⁵⁷ Ellen Wayles Randolph Coolidge, in *Jefferson In His Own Time: A Biographical Chronicle of His Life Drawn from Recollections, Interviews, and Memoirs by Family, Friends, and Associates*, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, 152.
- ⁵⁸ Harry S. Randall, *The Life of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 3, [New York: Derby & Jackson, 1858], 349.
- ⁵⁹ Peter J. Hatch, "*A Rich Spot of Earth*": *Thomas Jefferson's Revolutionary Garden at Monticello*, [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012], 4.
- ⁶⁰ Thomas Jefferson, *Thomas Jefferson's Garden Book*, 639.

⁶¹ Thomas Jefferson, *Thomas Jefferson's Garden Book*, 442-3, 469, 495.

⁶² Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, vol. ii, 37-38.

⁶³ Hatch, 9.

⁶⁴ Elle Barrett, "Jefferson's table," *Southern Living* 33, no. 5 [May 1998], 117.

⁶⁵ Hatch, 13.

Chapter VIII: Conclusion

¹ Meacham, 487.

² J. Jefferson Looney, "Thomas Jefferson's Last Letter," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 112, no. 2, [Richmond: The Virginia Historical Society, 2004], 180.

³ Thomas Jefferson, *Thomas Jefferson's Garden Book*, 610-611.

⁴ Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, vol. ii, 1408-1409.

⁵ Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, vol. ii, 1415.

⁶ Ellis, 14.

⁷ Jefferson held Voltaire in high esteem, keeping a bust of the French philosopher in his Entrance Hall and recommending that all young men read his work and owning many works himself; Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia, "Voltaire Bust (Sculpture)," The Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc., http://www.monticello.org/site/house-and-gardens/voltaire-bust-sculpture#_note-1 [accessed April 20, 2013]; Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, xxii, 19.

⁸ Gay, 201.

⁹ Gay, 201-202.

¹⁰ Gay, 201.

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