

Mr. Jefferson

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Chef puts Kitchen to good use for TV show *A Taste of History*

WALTER STAIB made history at Monticello in July.

And it was delicious.

Staib, an internationally known chef and the proprietor of the historic City Tavern in Philadelphia, became the first chef to cook in Monticello's restored Kitchen during three days of shooting for four episodes of a new public-television program, *A Taste of History*.

"It was terrific to welcome Walter to Monticello's restored Kitchen," said Susan R. Stein, Monticello's Richard Gilder Senior Curator and vice president for museum programs. "He is a true authority on 18th-century cooking techniques and period recipes, and he is also a tremendous Jefferson enthusiast."

Using Jefferson-era recipes from the Thomas Jefferson Foundation's *Dining at Monticello* and his own *The City Tavern Cookbook: Recipes from the Birthplace of American Cuisine*, Staib prepared four meals in the Kitchen's open hearth: stuffed cabbage with fried asparagus; bouilli (a boiled beef dish) with bouillon potatoes; white bean and bacon soup, chicken fricassee, and herbed barley; and curried lamb with rice pilaf and stewed mushrooms.

And he didn't do it the way many cooking programs do: show some preparation before presenting a pre-made finished product. Staib did most of his

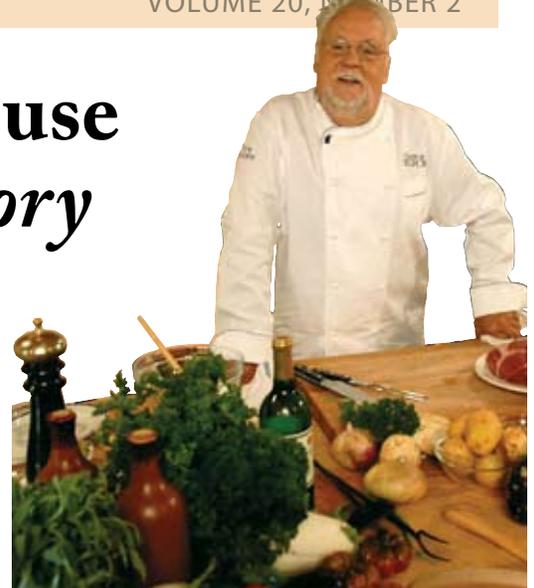
preparation and all of the cooking in real time. He even built the fire in the hearth on each day of shooting.

"Having the opportunity to film at Monticello and be granted special access to cook in Thomas Jefferson's Kitchen was definitely a high point for me, personally and professionally," Staib said. "After studying Jefferson the gastronome for so many years, this was truly a pilgrimage."

"During the time I spent at Monticello I could feel Mr. Jefferson's presence presiding over me in the Kitchen, making sure the food was prepared just as it would have been for him by his hard-working staff."

But Staib didn't spend all his time at Monticello in front of a roaring fire in the Kitchen. The video-audio crew from Multi Media Productions of Langhorne, Pa., also recorded five non-cooking segments for *A Taste of History*: a tour of the main house with Stein; time in the Vegetable Garden with Peter Hatch, Monticello's director of gardens and grounds; a visit to the work and storage spaces below the house with Justin Sarafin, the dependencies project coordinator; a conversation about James Hemings and other enslaved cooks with Leni Sorensen, Monticello's African-American research historian; and a look at the Thomas Jefferson Visitor Center and Smith History Center.

"The garden was also a special place for me," Staib said. "That we were able to use some beautiful produce right from Jefferson's garden in the meals that we



prepared on the show made it all the more extraordinary.

"All of these things, coupled with the assistance of the wonderful staff at Monticello, made this a truly unforgettable experience."

The four episodes shot at Monticello will be the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth in *A Taste of History's* 13-show season. The program premiered on Philadelphia's WHYY on Oct. 31 and is available to public television stations throughout the country. For program information, contact the PBS station in your area, check your local listings, or visit the Web site www.atasteofhistory.com.

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