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Savor: A Revolution in Food Culture
investigates radical changes in the history of dining

Hartford, Conn. (Nov. 26, 2019)—What many of us eat, the way food is cooked, and how we dine continue to be influenced by radical changes that took place in France and England between 1650 and 1789, the start of the French Revolution. Savor: A Revolution in Food Culture explores the details and events behind this transformation. Centuries before our time, light, flavorful cuisine was promoted by intellectuals and prepared by cooks and connoisseurs. The changing food culture inspired the invention of ceramic and silver ware vessels designed to serve the latest dishes. Replete with rare objects, from tureens in the forms of cauliflowers and chickens, to early cookbooks and gardening manuals, Savor reveals fascinating histories and stories about advances in horticulture, surprisingly modern philosophies on healthy eating, and a shift to more informal dining. Savor will be on view at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art from February 29 through May 25, 2020.

“We have become obsessed with food and dining—modern foodies reflect the passion for gastronomy that consumed gourmets 350 years ago when even princes and members of the nobility tried their hands as amateur cooks,” said exhibition curator Meredith Chilton, Curator Emerita, at the Gardiner Museum, Toronto. “Savor is a delectable exploration of
the eighteenth-century’s fascination with food. It brings the profound transformations of the time to life through fascinating objects, delicious recipes, and amusing stories.”

The exhibition begins, as did the eighteenth-century meal, in the fertile soil of the kitchen garden. There, gardeners experimented with horticulture and expanded the growing seasons of fruits and vegetables. French cooks used this bounty to introduce more refined and healthier cooking, which gained popularity throughout Europe. At the same time, French and English philosophers developed food theories that sound startlingly modern, promoting locally grown products and the appeal of vegetarianism. These developments transpired against a backdrop of social change that brought about a desire among European elites for informality and privacy, dining at later hours, and enjoying meals by candlelight.

The exhibition is organized around different themes, including the garden, farm, hunt, and marketplace; the kitchen and cooks; and the pantry and dining table. Drawn from major museums and private collections the ceramics, silver, glass, rare books and paintings, joined by the Wadsworth’s outstanding holdings, are a feast for the eyes. A rare sculpture of children shelling peas, made at the Chelsea porcelain factory in England, shows how the French learned to cultivate peas out of season to satisfy King Louis XIV’s obsession with this tasty vegetable. A tureen in the form of a life-size and realistic boar’s head might have come alive on the table as steam from a robust game stew escaped through its nostrils. A pink and green pierced basket made by the famous French royal porcelain manufactory at Sèvres would have held marrons glacés (roasted or candied chestnuts). Porcelain was the ideal material to present this extravagant sweet treat with the holes in the basket enabling the air to circulate keeping the candied chestnuts from oozing syrup. Mingling among the exceptional eighteenth-century works of decorative art are historical cookbooks and works of contemporary art, including ceramics by British artist Kate Malone and whimsical knitted objects by Madame Tricot (Dominique Kaehler Schweizer).

“Savor offers an exciting opportunity to explore the historical phenomenon of this revolution in food culture. It sheds new light on the remarkable works of art made for dining,” said Linda Roth, Senior Curator and Charles C. and Eleanor Lamont Cunningham Curator of European Decorative Arts at the Wadsworth. Through a partnership with Auerfarm in Bloomfield, CT the fountain in Avery Court will be transformed into a period inspired culinary and sensory herb garden, while the center courtyard outside will be planted with spring edibles, available to our museum café, Untitled Bistro. “Through collaborations with local chefs, farmers, gardeners, and designers, we are bringing the excitement around the universal topic of food into the museum,” said Roth.
Savor: A Revolution in Food Culture is organized by the Gardiner Museum, Toronto, and curated by Meredith Chilton, C. M., Curator Emerita at the Gardiner Museum. This presentation of the exhibition is a collaboration between the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art and the Gardiner Museum. It is accompanied by the fully illustrated cookbook, The King’s Peas: Delectable Recipes and Their Stories from the Age of Enlightenment.

Related Programs
March 12, 2020, noon, Gallery Talk.
Curator Linda Roth will discuss the fascinating changes to food culture that took hold in France and England before the French Revolution. An exploration of the distinct works of art that marked these changes illuminates the way we consume food and dine today.

March 14, 2020, 10am–1pm, Second Saturdays for Families: Market Finds.
Join a docent and discover what happens when food and art collide. Then work with youth from Forge City Works to make art that looks good enough to eat.

March 14, 2020, 10am–1pm, Encounters: Savor: A Revolution in Food Culture.
Dig into discussions about food cultivation in conjunction with the exhibition Savor. Short readings will be provided in advance. Refreshments and lunch included. Free with RSVP to faculty@wadsworthatheneum.org to reserve a seat and lunch.

March 19, 2020, noon, Gallery Talk.
Learn about the social and economic changes that impacted eating habits with Meredith Chilton, Curator Emerita at the Gardiner Museum.

March 25, 2020; 5pm reception, 6pm lecture, Panel Discussion: The Dining Room Then and Now.
A fascinating conversation about dining customs across cultures with culinary historian Jessica Harris, designer Thomas Jayne, educator David Dangremond, and curator Brandy Culp. Co-sponsored with The Design and Decorative Arts Council at the Wadsworth.

April 11, 2020, 10am–1pm Second Saturdays for Families: Green Thumbs
Experience the sensory garden by Auerfarm in Avery Court and participate in an asparagus art activity.

May 7, 2020, 5pm Reception, 6pm Lecture by Celebrated Food Scholar Ivan Day.


May 9, 2020, 10am–1pm, Second Saturday for Families
Meet and even cuddle with the goats from Bradley Mountain Farm. Food historian Ivan Day demonstrates eighteenth century ice cream making methods.
Some programs are still in development. Check the Wadsworth’s website for the latest schedule of Savor related programs: thewadsworth.org/savor

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**About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art**
Founded in 1842 with a vision for infusing art into the American experience, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is home to a collection of nearly 50,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years and encompassing European art from antiquity through contemporary as well as American art from the 1600s to today. The Wadsworth Atheneum’s five connected buildings—representing architectural styles including Gothic Revival, modern International Style, and 1960s Brutalism—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn. Hours: Wednesday–Friday: 11am–5pm; Saturday and Sunday: 10am–5pm Admission: $5–15; discounts for members, students and seniors. Free admission for Hartford residents with Wadsworth Welcome registration. Free “happy hour” admission 4–5pm. Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website: thewadsworth.org.

**About the Gardiner Museum**
The Gardiner Museum, Toronto, brings together people of all ages and backgrounds through the shared values of creativity, wonder, and community that clay and ceramic traditions inspire. The George R. Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art was founded by Toronto businessperson and philanthropist George Gardiner and his wife Helen and opened in 1984. The Gardiner Museum’s collection of ceramics comprises approximately 4,000 objects including the most important collection of European porcelain in Canada, with particular strengths in Meissen, Vienna, and Hausmaler decorated porcelain, as well as a comprehensive collection of figures inspired by the commedia dell’arte. It holds the best collection of Italian Renaissance maiolica in Canada, and a superb collection of English tin-glazed pottery. The Gardiner preserves highly significant collections of ceramics from the Ancient Americas, Chinese blue and white porcelain, Japanese porcelain, and contemporary Canadian ceramics. It also houses a research library and archives, clay studios, award-winning Shop, and a restaurant. The Gardiner Museum is among the few museums in the world focused on ceramics, and is one of the world’s most notable specialty museums. For more information visit: gardinermuseum.com.
Images (left to right):

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