

For Immediate Release January 18, 2022

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Laurel Museum's Newest Exhibition "What's Cookin' Laurel?" Restaurants, Recipes & Community" Opens February 18, 2022

Pasta Plus, Sam and Elsie's. Olive on Main, Matthews Bar. Mom's Tuna Noodle Casserole. Cheese Fondue. Grandma's Strawberry Pie. These dishes and places from times past and present are part of the Laurel Museum's newest exhibit: ***What's Cookin' Laurel? Restaurants, Recipes & Community.*** opening Friday, February 18, 2022.

What's Cookin' Laurel? puts food in the spotlight, exploring all the ways that we as Americans, Marylanders and Laurelites connect with our past and experience the present through growing food, cooking, dining out, and shopping. The exhibit will explore everything from the Laurel Farmer's Market, to the old Laurel Mall, to Epiphany parties in Old Town.

Figure 1: A circa 1920's photo of The Ellis Market, which occupied the space at 337 Main Street. The market operated into the 1950s. Photo courtesy Siegel/Ellis Family

Visitors will discover Laurel's early food stores and small grocery chains, and the role that local farms and farmers played in supplying food to Laurel residents. Spoiler alert: Farm to Table is NOT a new concept!





Figure 2 This is God's Church but It's My Kitchen. Mrs. Helen "Ginny" Johnson in the kitchen at St. Mark's. The photo and a plaque dedicated to Mrs. Johnson are on view at the "What's Cookin' Laurel?" exhibit. Photo credit: St. Mark's United Methodist Church

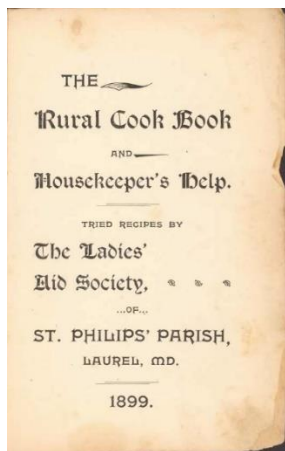
The exhibit also looks at the impact of segregation on the food traditions of the African American community of Laurel. It does this by exploring the integral relationship between food, faith, and community at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Laurel's historic African American church.

Exhibit visitors will find artifacts from closed stores and other Laurel-food related history. Laurel is rich in restaurants today – more than 100 at last count from the City of Laurel. Several of the community's popular home grown restaurants – Mad Cow, Tampico, Olive on Main, Oliver's and More than Java are profiled. It also recalls dining establishments from the past, 200 at last count, from c. 1816 to Pasta Plus, which closed just in January 2022.



Figure 3 For almost 40 years dinners would line up outside of Pasta Plus, one of Laurel's most popular restaurants. The restaurant closed in January, 2022. Source: Pasta Plus Facebook page

A particular highlight of the exhibit is the selection of community cookbooks ranging from faith-based groups to the group fighting the Laurel Redskins stadium. Visitors will discover food trends and ways that they can help with food insecurity and the green movement in Laurel and beyond. They will also have the opportunity to discover some cooks' signature dishes.



Notes LHS Executive Director Ann Bennett "We thought that after the heavy events of the last two years, food would also be a fun way to reconnect with each other. Food is family. Food is culture. Food celebrates our roots and shapes our identity. It is an expression of human art and creativity and has the power to transport us in time and place. "

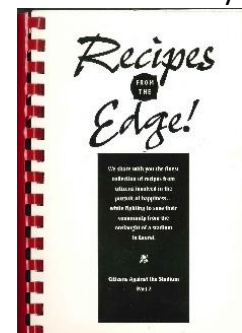


Figure 4 & 5: Community cookbooks. 1899 from St. Phillips Episcopal Church, and from the Citizens Against the Stadium2, a group opposing a Redskins stadium in Laurel. Laurel Museum Collection.

The Laurel Museum is located at 817 Main Street, Laurel, Maryland. Open hours are 12-4 Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Admission is Free. Masks are required, and the Museum will limit visitors to ensure social distancing and follow current safety protocols. A Grand Opening and Members-only event celebrating the new exhibit is planned for early Spring. ***What's Cookin' Laurel?*** runs through December 18. The Laurel Historical Society is also available to groups and for research by appointment only. For more information visit www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org, or contact the LHS at info@laurelhistoricalsociety.org, 301-725-7975.