



Searching for Malinda Russell

Priya Haji Brings Fair Trade to eBay

Iron Chef Cat Cora

Cynthia Tom Paints  
Women of Wisdom

Transatlantic Flight



This Publication Brought To You By:



## Where in the World Is Malinda Russell?

It is the preeminent question in the mind of Jan Longone, the world's oldest collector of antiquarian cookbooks — a title she is still not sure that she likes, quite frankly. But at age 75, Longone is without equal in the historical knowledge of American foodways. She began her career in 1972 when food elites were scoffing at the



*Jan Longone is the world's top expert on American foodways.*

notion of anything grand or notable about Yank food. French cuisine was the only cuisine one could seriously discuss in intellectual circles. Longone begged to differ.

But, Malinda Russell. It's a name Longone ponders every day, and she has been entwined in the Russell enigma for nearly eight years. It was in 2001 that an innocuous package arrived at the Longone Center for American Culinary Research, located in the Clements Library at the University of Michigan. The plain brown wrapper suggested nothing out of the ordinary, and in fact such packages found their way to Longone's desk quite frequently. Culinarians from across the world routinely send her cookbooks and food ephemera for her collection. Ephemera — you know ... old knickknacks, collectibles, chotski.

Anyway, the cookbook in this package was written by Malinda Russell, an antebellum foodie who was African-American and free. To the point, the cookbook is the earliest one written by a woman of color in the United States, at least, as far as we know. "Domestic Cookbook: Containing a Careful Selection of Useful Receipts for the Kitchen" was published in 1866. But there is more to this story than dusting off an old, ethnic cookbook, else why would thousands of people reach out to Longone after The New York Times ran the story in 2007?

"When Molly (O'Neill) wrote that," explains Longone, "she highlighted a critical fact that made this book special. Soul food, which has been 'established' as the bedrock of African-American cuisine, was not to be found in Russell's recipes." Now some historians are seriously rethinking the whole idea about soul food and its role in Americana.

Russell also provided an account of her personal travails, which included operating a pastry shop and boardinghouse, and working

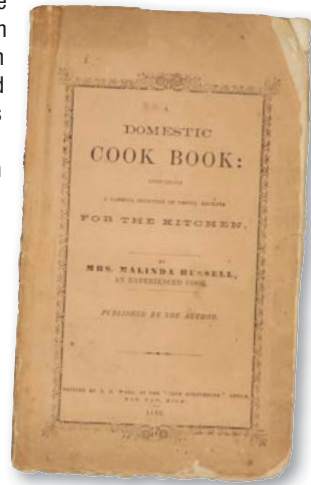
as a cook and running a laundry. There was the death of her husband and a holdup that left her with nothing but a son to care for. "I found myself wanting to know her," shares Longone. "She was truly an American who persevered through hardships and remained strong. For me, Malinda is a mentor and an idol."

The quest soon began to find Russell and complete her biography. "We find with these older cookbooks that the authors simply do not exist. The books are always written by Mrs. John Smith, never Mrs. Mary Smith or just Mary Smith," says Longone, adding, "The women just disappear." Determined to not let that happen to Russell, Longone and her husband, Dan, have spent countless hours driving and calling and researching, trying to piece together Russell's life. There is a recent discovery that might fill in many of the holes, but more research has to be done before the final chapter of Russell's life can be written.

By the way, was Longone successful in refuting the premise of a nonexistent American cuisine? Well, yeah. The Longone Center for American Culinary Research is packed with the most comprehensive archive of our nation's gastronomy, and no longer do food snooties deny the immense, robust, outrageously tasteful contribution American cooks have made to the rest of the world. Longone is a pioneer of culinary history, and her work has provided a foundation to academicians who would establish culinary history as a vital social science.

Case in point, ice. Americans virtually invented the ice industry by cutting blocks from northern lakes, then pristine and pure, and shipping them around the world packed in sawdust. Granted that little might have been left when the ice arrived in, say, Bombay, but it made a difference in how people ate. Namely, it created leftovers, which for the first time could be stored from one day to the next. Granted, leftovers don't establish a national cuisine, but the bigger point is America has a vital culinary history.

Longone isn't getting up from the table anytime soon. She's still managing the intense work archiving thousands of documents. You can take a virtual tour of some of the items in the collection and order a facsimile of the Russell book at [www.clements.umich.edu/culinary/index.html](http://www.clements.umich.edu/culinary/index.html).



*This 1866 cookbook is the earliest known to be written by an African-American woman.*



*This 1902 edition of "The Cooking Club" sold for 5 cents.*

## A Place of Her Own

With brushstrokes and acrylic, Cynthia Tom creates space. Not just expansive skies and rolling landscapes, though many of her works incorporate airy environments. Tom is fascinated with the concept of a woman's own space — her place in the world, her outer dimensions and, most of all, her understanding of herself.

"If you had a place of your own, what would it be?" she muses. "When you can answer, you have a strength and confidence that you didn't have before. You can coach and mentor other women."

Tom comes to her own place via a circuitous route. As the daughter and granddaughter of Chinese immigrants, Tom's family history was carved by difficult political and cultural climates on both sides of the Pacific.

Her immediate foremothers were bound by expectations, traditions and situations beyond their control, and, in some cases, literally bound in the ancient practice of foot binding. And the Chinese culture of reticence meant their stories were hidden away.

"My mom and her siblings didn't even know their mother's real name. They weren't aware of it, but the

*"Poetic Impulse" by Cynthia Tom*



name they called her is the Chinese word for 'servant,'" says Tom. "Learning things about my grandmothers threw me more into becoming a women's advocate."

So with a paintbrush and other tools, she creates places where women explore their experiences, opportunities and communities — and where they challenge stereotypical ideas about culture and gender.

Many of Tom's paintings are dedicated to women who literally own large spaces of canvas, and Tom is generous with the natural curves and beautiful faces that she sees in authentic Asian women. Their strong postures and commanding presence deny any sense of passivity. Tom's portraits of women emanate a powerful serenity.

In some of her paintings, such as "Flying In the Trees" pictured on *Unity's* cover, she floats many of them in surreal environments where generous dollops of Eastern and Western symbolism are juxtaposed. Some are weightless in the air and others in water, reflecting Tom's conviction that people, and women specifically, need space in their lives to "float."

"We need permission to just be free-floating and explore, open to all experiences and outcomes in life," she philosophizes. "Women — humans in general — don't give ourselves enough freedom to expand. If you die without doing that, you've missed your whole point of being on the planet."

Bamboo rods, calla lilies, cherry trees and often other women provide the grounding support that ensures Tom's subjects don't simply float away.



*"Location, Location, Location" by Cynthia Tom*

"If you put it all together, my work is about becoming more conscious of your place in the world and all of the things that brought you here. The pieces that inform who you are, what you can give, how you need to be nurtured and how you can educate in the community in which you participate or live."

In addition to painting, Tom creates mixed-media art projects, sculptures and installations. She also curates shows for the Asian American Women Artists Association in San Francisco, of which she is president. Across her work, Tom addresses the issue of freeing women from cultural norms that can inhibit their joy.

"Dialogue is important to give compassion to each other. Art is a great way for people to come to an issue themselves, then become educated and discuss it."

Tom's portfolio is prolific, and she has many vibrant and masterful images on her Web site, which you can visit at [www.cynthiatom.com](http://www.cynthiatom.com).



*Cynthia Tom*



"Solace" by Ann Tanksley

## Transatlantic Flight

### Ann Tanksley

If the works and career of an artist illustrate something deeper within the artist's life, then we can only assume that Ann Tanksley is on a personal mission to explore the social realism of ethnicity across all cultures. Her works suggest a keen social perceptiveness and a methodology

that is grounded in principle. That is why Tanksley is widely recognized as a remarkable contemporary artist.

Born in Pittsburgh, Tanksley's life as an artist mirrors her personal life of travel and learning. She has spent many years globe-hopping, including retracing the route of the African slave trade from Africa to the Caribbean, Brazil and the United States. In 2004,

Tanksley visited Qatar, the tiny country that juts conspicuously into the Persian Gulf, where she was featured in a solo exhibition and worked with local art students.

Tanksley has an intense commitment to art that is also evident in her academic resume. She studied at the Art Student League, Parsons School of Design, the Print Making Workshop and the New School for Social Research. She graduated from Carnegie Mellon University.

One of the most interesting aspects of Tanksley's work is the motivation that drives it — a passion for studying a culture's roots. For instance, she became so inspired by the writings of Harlem Renaissance author Zora Neale Hurston that she created a series of acclaimed works titled "Images of Zora," which honor the stories written by the African-American writer. Her works often give a voice to circumstances that otherwise might be shrouded in obscurity.

Tanksley's work is often associated with the style known as abstract expressionism.

Yet, the richness and diversity of her paintings draw from many different artistic traditions, including post-impressionism and social realism.

The paintings featured in this month's *Unity* are "Solace" and "She Is Hiding," both created in 2005. "Solace" was inspired by a scene Tanksley witnessed on one of her many trips between Brooklyn and Long Island. She noticed someone sitting on a bench — wrapped tightly to fend off the cold weather — who seemed lonely, yet peaceful and content.

"She Is Hiding" is based on a book about a family in Africa where the grandmother would go back into the bushes and hide. The scene pictured in Tanksley's mind reminded her of her childhood when she would hide from people by standing behind trees. This made her invisible. And, to this day Tanksley is an intensely



"She Is Hiding" by Ann Tanksley





private person, preferring to be in the background creating her art.

After a long career in art, she still finds time to select a canvas, arrange her palette and explore a mix of hues, strokes and shapes. She has no choice. "I am an extremely creative person and must expend my energies in creative endeavors," she confesses. Art is also therapy for Tanksley; it gives her a sense of well-being and tremendous fulfillment.

Today, many of Tanksley's paintings, etchings and monoprints hang in the permanent collections of the Studio Museum in Harlem, Medgar Evers College, the Hewitt Collection and the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

### Mary Jane Ansell

In the musical city of Brighton, England beats the heart of a painter who has made decisive moves to



further her artistic career. Mary Jane Ansell, born in Shropshire, England, originally focused her education at

Brighton University on drawing and narrative. She began exhibiting her work in 2002 and since has won numerous awards including the Sussex Open Painting Award. She was invited to submit a work for auction at the National Portrait Gallery's 150th Anniversary in 2006.

By 2006, it was evident that Ansell's work had evolved into a consistent and dramatic use of light and shadow. Her careful finishing technique gives her paintings a remarkable level of optical credibility.

In the works presented here, "Release" (on the cover), "Bones of You" and "By Her Own Hand," Ansell captivates viewers with realistic details. "By Her Own Hand" and "Release" are both explorations of restriction and release.

She explains, "I began to see strong parallels within the two areas



*"Bones of You" by Mary Jane Ansell, courtesy the artist.*

and I'm sure I will come back to these ideas again in due course. These two paintings stem from ideas about the ties that bind us to loved ones, tracing patterns of behavior, connections, dependencies, external and self-imposed restrictions."

"Bones of You" refers to an extraordinary lyric by Guy Garvey, songwriter for the band Elbow, that

describes the melancholy resulting from living with loss.

Ansell's artistic motivation could simply be a matter of DNA, as she explains, "I am completely absorbed by painting and see no point at which my fascination with painting will fade — I hope I get the chance to see what I'm capable of producing into a ripe old age. That's what I look forward to!"

*"By Her Own Hand" by Mary Jane Ansell, courtesy the artist.*



# Searching for Gluten-Free Ono

By Susan Stanton, originally published in *Audrey magazine*



*Susan Soon He Stanton is a playwright currently working on her master's at Yale.*

In Hawaii, when food tastes delicious, we call it *ono*. Hawaii is a melting pot of Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai and Filipino influences. All of this ethnic variety and fresh ingredients lend itself to a rich culinary landscape. In other words, the food is good and people in Hawaii love to eat. Though born and raised in Hawaii, I currently live in New York. When I fly home, my mother faithfully meets me at the gate with the *ono* food I am craving the most — teriyaki chicken bento, spam musubi or a steaming plump *char siu* bao.

Coming home also means large family gatherings. Interacting with the older generations of my Chinese family brings not only the pleasures of eating but also its challenges. You must eat everything on your plate, no matter how high the food is piled. Once, after a particularly extensive feast, I trembled at the sight of the last dumpling. My great-aunt clucked impatiently and handed the offending dumpling to my mother, instructing her to feed it to me, or else.

However, over several years, I started to feel unwell, especially after I ate certain foods. Although I was diagnosed with a slew of minor ailments, doctors could not pinpoint the source of my health problems. Finally, my blood tested positive for celiac disease, a genetic disorder triggered by consuming gluten, a protein in wheat, rye and barley.

Although a serious disease, the cure is simple: don't eat gluten — ever again. It seemed easy, but gluten is hidden in trace amounts in many foods, especially Asian cuisine: most sauces (including soy, teriyaki, oyster, fish and hoisin), processed foods and fried and breaded food. Coming home for the holidays was now a nightmare. I lost nearly 20 pounds, and I wandered the grocery store terror-stricken. I did not know what to eat.

Celiac disease is an autoimmune disease, which means that the body is literally fighting itself, and the damage is slow and cumulative. When people with celiac disease eat gluten, instead of their bodies digesting the protein properly, their immune systems react by damaging the hair-like villi that line the inside of the small intestines. Damaged villi are unable to properly absorb nutrients, which can lead to malnourishment and further complications.

It has taken me more than a year to recover and adapt to a gluten-free lifestyle. Luckily, Arjuna Bull, a chef at Brasserie 8 1/2 in New York City, has helped me keep a positive attitude and taught me that nearly anything can be made gluten-free with enough patience and experimentation. He and I have been able to create gluten-free versions of my favorite childhood dishes.

The greatest incentive to eat gluten-free is how great I feel. So rarely in life is there a “miracle cure” that makes everything better. My head now feels clear, and I am amazed at the energy I have. Of course, when I go home, I still get sad as I drive past my favorite noodle shop, knowing I can never eat there again. But I am comforted knowing that I can whip up something equally *ono* on my own.



## Sesame-Crusted Tuna With Cucumber Noodles

This delicious gluten-free recipe comes from Chef Arjuna Bull of New York City's Brasserie 8 1/2. Cucumber noodles are a refreshing alternative to rice or noodles and are lower in carbs. Serves 4.

### For the Tuna

- 1/2 cup dry wakami seaweed
- 2 tablespoons mirin
- 2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, minced
- 2 scallion stalks, chopped
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds
- 2 Japanese cucumbers (seedless)
- 4 tablespoons wasabi tobiko (flying fish roe in a wasabi base)
- 1 pound tuna loin (sushi grade is best)
- salt and pepper
- 1 cup sesame seeds (1/2 cup white, 1/2 cup black)

### For the Ginger Soy Sauce

- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, minced
- 3 tablespoons gluten-free soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 3 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 scallion stalk, chopped
- 1 Thai chili pepper (or red pepper flakes) optional

Soak wakami in warm water for 15 minutes until tender. Drain and season with mirin, rice wine vinegar, ginger, scallions and teaspoon of the sesame seeds.

Peel cucumbers then slice on a Japanese mandolin using a thin blade to cut into a “linguine” type thickness. Toss cucumber noodles with seasoned wakami and 3 tablespoons wasabi tobiko and salt to taste. Chill.

Mix together ingredients for ginger soy sauce and set aside.

Lightly season tuna with salt and pepper. Roll in sesame seeds. Heat a sauté pan and coat with oil. Sear tuna (about 45 seconds per side). Remove from pan. Twirl chilled cucumber noodles into a small bundle.

Slice tuna, place around noodles and drizzle with ginger soy sauce before serving.

## In the Kitchen With Cat Cora

“Busy.” It’s really the only word that can describe Cat Cora. Honorable mention goes to “precocious.” At age 15, she wrote a business plan for her first restaurant. “Caring” deserves merit. Chefs for Humanity, a network of celebrity foodies who raise money to feed countries in distress, was cooked up by Cora. Yes, we meant to say *countries*. “Talented” — you don’t become a cast member of “Iron Chef America” without cooking skills. Cora is the only woman to earn a spot on the show. “Mother, author, restaurateur ...,” and we’re back to “busy.”

Cora founded Chefs for Humanity after the Asian tsunami of 2004, the natural disaster that claimed more than 225,000 lives. Since then, more chefs and food industry professionals have joined the organization, and as a team, they have responded to disasters across the globe, *and at home*. When Hurricane Katrina hit Cora’s home state in 2005, she found herself cooking alongside Chef Ming Tsai, the Asian maestro, in the Bayou View Elementary School kitchen in Gulfport, Miss. “Both of us were working feverishly, using cafeteria pots and pans and any food that came in as donations,” she recalls. “Suddenly cooking wasn’t a way of earning a living or even something I do because I love it. Cooking was a way to help. That was the high point of my career.”

Her latest cookbook, “Cooking From the Hip,” builds on that experience and helps home cooks improve what they are usually best at — coming up with meals on the fly with whatever is available. Hopefully, instead of nuking frozen meals loaded with preservatives or throwing together something outrageous like ham and Gorgonzola on cinnamon toast (don’t laugh, it’s really not that bad), readers will garner the confidence to prepare truly exciting dishes that will impress family and friends. (OK, the ham and toast thing was horrible, don’t try it.)



*Cat Cora’s latest cookbook helps home chefs improvise with style.*

Cora is currently prepping for another season of “Iron Chef America.” It will be her fifth year on the show. She also recently landed the executive chef spot at Bon Appetit magazine, and she is expecting a new addition to the family in 2009. “Busy.”

## Cat’s Crispy ‘Fried’ Chicken

This chicken tastes fried but does away with all the grease. The secret is to lock in the moisture by dredging the chicken pieces in flour, dipping them into spiced buttermilk and rolling them in crushed cornflakes. This recipe is from Cora’s latest cookbook, “Cooking From the Hip.” Serves 4 to 6.

- 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 2 ½- to 3-pound fryer, cut into pieces (2 breasts, 2 thighs, 2 wings)
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cups cornflakes
- ½ cup light buttermilk
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional)
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon finely chopped fresh sage or ½ teaspoon ground sage

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Pour the olive oil into a baking pan large enough to hold the chicken pieces in a single layer without crowding. Using your fingers, rub the oil over the dish so that it’s completely but lightly coated. Rinse the chicken in cold water and pat dry. In a wide bowl or on a large plate, season the flour with the salt and pepper. Dredge

each chicken piece in the flour until it’s completely coated. Tap the chicken against the side of the bowl to loosen any excess flour and set the pieces aside. Discard the flour.

Crush the cornflakes by placing them in a big re-sealable plastic bag, carefully pressing the bag to push out the air. Seal the bag (leaving as little air inside as possible) and crush the flakes using a rolling pin. Pour the crushed flakes into a wide bowl or onto a large plate.

In a bowl large enough to dip the chicken pieces, mix the buttermilk, cayenne (if using), paprika and sage. Give each floured chicken piece a good buttermilk bath all over, then roll in the crushed flakes.

Arrange chicken in the prepared baking pan. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, lower the heat to 375 degrees and bake another 25 to 30 minutes, until cooked through and crispy. (The juices should run clear when the meat is pierced with a knife.) Serve.





## Finding Fair Trade on eBay

"If you are going to buy something anyway, as a gift, or for yourself, or for your home, then why not buy something that has the hope or a dream of another person embedded in it?" asks Priya Haji. When you put it that way, why not? Haji, at the age of 37, has two decades of social entrepreneurship under her handcrafted, fair trade-certified belt. Her latest venture is WorldofGood.com by eBay, an online marketplace of jewelry, clothing, personal care and home items handcrafted in socially and environmentally conscious ways around the world. It was four years ago that she and a small circle of friends — all with freshly printed MBAs — set out to create a company that would make a positive social impact and run on the colossal power of consumerism. Haji took the helm as CEO and has successfully charted the company's path ever since.

It is a business that manifests her profile and priorities: "My own family reflects the diversity of America," Haji explains. "My mom is from India, my dad is from East Africa and I grew up in Texas. I had the benefit of a great family, access to an excellent education, and as a woman of color in this generation, so many more choices than anyone like me would have ever had in earlier times. I am committed to finding a way to use my resources to create opportunity for many other women around the world."

Today World of Good engages 6,000 mostly female artisans in 34 countries who handcraft jewelry, clothing, personal care products and home goods. And most of those products are created from recycled, reclaimed or sustainable materials. It is estimated that these artisans are responsible for more than 25,000 dependents, all of whom benefit from better health and educational and living conditions as a result of fairly compensated work. Word of Good holds a footprint in stores nationwide, including Whole Foods and Barnes & Noble College Booksellers, so the eBay partnership was a natural next step for a business determined to make conscientious choices easy and accessible to the larger market.

World of Good is not Haji's first foray into organizing social do-goodery. During high school, she helped her father,



*The partnership of Priya Haji, CEO of World of Good, and Robert Chatwani of eBay has green markets buzzing.*

a physician, establish a free health clinic called Health for All in her hometown of Bryan, Texas. Today, Health for All is still in operation, serving more than 5,000 patients a year. A few years later, Haji focused on improving the conditions in East Palo Alto during the height of its crack epidemic and violent drug wars. She joined forces with a former convict to spearhead a community-based substance abuse recovery center that hews a path through the desperate social tangle of addiction, violence and HIV infection. Haji served as executive director of the center, called Free at Last, for seven years and helped it bring great things to the community: mobile health clinics, affordable housing, economic development and counseling for thousands of people. Today the agency has a 55-person staff; a \$2.6 million budget; comprehensive programs; and regional, state and national recognition.

Asked how she has accomplished so much, "It's about keeping 'steam in the team,'" she laughs. "What really matters is the people you surround yourself with — who you are around shapes what happens. It's about being caring, and nurturing, and respectful, and healthy to other people and not driving an idea to the point of imbalance."

For more information about fair trade products and World of Good, visit [www.worldofgood.com](http://www.worldofgood.com).

*Six thousand artisans, mostly women, now have access to the power of eBay.*



*Mitra Bali artisans in Indonesia*

