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# HERITAGE HARVEST FESTIVAL

AT MONTICELLO

Named  
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**FOOD & WINE**  
magazine

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## **A Rich Spot of Earth: Thomas Jefferson's Revolutionary Garden**

with Peter Hatch

## **Defining Mid-Atlantic Cuisine**

with Jeremiah Langhorne

## **Drinking History: Jefferson and Ginger Beer**

with Georgia Dunn

# Know your heritage

## Food is the focus at this festival

By Erin O'Hare

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**T**here's always something new to learn about food, and for the past 11 years, the Heritage Harvest Festival at Monticello has been one of the best ways to learn a lot about the history of what we eat in a little bit of time. On Saturday, chefs, farmers, culinary historians, purveyors and foodies from all over the country will convene to revel in their love for food and share it with others. Here's just a taste of what you'll find on the mountain this weekend.

### Eat your veggies

Seed saver, master gardener and Heritage Harvest Festival co-founder Ira Wallace will serve up more than 100 varieties of heirloom tomatoes and a few dozen varieties of heirloom peppers, melons and collards in the tasting tent from 10am-4pm on Saturday. Most of these varieties have been grown locally, by Wallace and other gardeners at Twin Oaks and Acorn communities in Lou-

isa County. At the tasting, be sure to ask Wallace about the origins of the varieties you sample: "Taste is good, but when you have a story, a recipe, it takes you back to some time and some place that is really good," Wallace told C-VILLE back in July. Wallace also wrote *The Timber Press Guide to Vegetable Gardening in the Southeast*, regarded as the book on year-round gardening in the region. So if you're itching to start your own garden, or just try your hand at growing your own tomato plants, she's the one to talk to (Wallace will also be signing books from 1:15-1:45pm and discussing seed saving and a four season garden).

### Drink gingerly

Most people would be surprised to know that ginger beer "was never meant to be a soft drink," says Georgia Dunn, brewer for Island Ginger Beer and a presenter at this year's festival.

When the British settled Jamestown, they quickly discovered that the water was not safe to drink, Dunn says. Water supplies, which contained a naturally occurring

amount of arsenic, were also contaminated with microorganisms that cause cholera and dysentery. While the settlers didn't quite understand what was causing their illness, they did know that consuming alcohol—which killed many of the microorganisms—mostly kept the illness away.

"Production of alcohol evolved as the primary means to preserve one's health," Dunn says. And beer specifically had long been used to solve problems with contaminated water, she says. Making beer requires just two basic ingredients—water and a form of starch/sugar—so just about anyone could do it, and the low alcohol level of beer allowed people to drink it whenever they needed to stay hydrated, says Dunn.

"Adding ginger provided additional benefits, as it is naturally anti-microbial," says Dunn. "It's the one thing that creates a hostile environment for every other living organism but that our stomachs love and that we thrive on with all of its nutritional benefits." By the mid-1800s, there were about 1,500 ginger beer breweries in the United States (not to mention the homebrewers out there).

All of that changed with Prohibition. No longer able to produce the fermented, traditional ginger beer but still needing to sustain a business, brewers converted their equipment to make a soft drink, Dunn says, and ginger beer—or, ginger ale—"landed next to the Cokes and Pepsis in the grocery store." But when Prohibition was lifted a generation later, the market was set; ginger beer in its initial form never returned. Most ginger beers on the market today are soft drink variations. "Prohibition beer," as Dunn calls it.

Chances are you'll never think of your whiskey ginger or Moscow mule the same way again after hearing Dunn's noon-1pm talk on "Drinking History: Jefferson and Ginger Beer." ☺

See all events at [heritageharvestfestival.com](http://heritageharvestfestival.com).