

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT: THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER DISCUSSES THE WPA'S PORTRAIT OF FOOD IN AMERICA BEFORE WORLD WAR II WITH AUTHOR MARK KURLANSKY

Philadelphia, PA (April 23, 2009) – In the 1930s, with the country gripped by the Great Depression and millions of Americans struggling to get by, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt created the Federal Writers' Project under the New Deal as a make-work program for artists and authors. Known as the WPA, this group took on several writing projects, including a chronicle of the eating habits, traditions, and struggles of local people across Depression-era America. *New York Times*-bestselling author **Mark Kurlansky** will join the National Constitution Center to discuss the findings of this project on Thursday, May 14 at 6:30 p.m. *Philadelphia Inquirer* food columnist **Rick Nichols** will moderate. Admission is free, but reservations are required and can be made by calling 215.409.6700.

From New York automats to Georgia Coca-Cola parties, Arkansas possum-eating clubs to Puget Sound salmon feasts, and Choctaw funerals to South Carolina barbecues, the WPA writers found Americans in their regional niches eating an enormous diversity of meals. From Mississippi chittlins to Indiana persimmon puddings, Maine lobsters and Montana beavertails, they recorded the curiosities, commonalities, and communities of American food. The project, called "America Eats," was abandoned in the early 1940s because of World War II and was never completed.

Mark Kurlansky is the *New York Times*-bestselling and James A. Beard Award-winning author of many books, including *Cod: A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World*, *Salt: A World History*, *1968: The Year That Rocked the World*, and, most recently,

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ADD ONE/FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Food of a Younger Land: The WPA's Portrait of Food in Pre World War II America. He is the winner of a *Bon Appetit* American Food and Entertaining Award for Food Writer of the Year, and the Glenfiddich Food and Drink Award for Food Book of the Year, as well as a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize.

Rick Nichols is a long-time writer for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* whose weekly food columns are frequently anthologized in Best Food Writing, the annual collection. He is a graduate of the University of North Carolina, and was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University.

A book sale and signing will follow the program, courtesy of Joseph Fox Bookshop.

This program is part of the Knight Constitutional Conversation Series, which has been generously underwritten by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation promotes excellence in journalism worldwide and invests in the vitality of the U.S. communities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers. Knight Foundation focuses on projects with the potential to create transformational change. For more, visit www.knightfoundation.org.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia's Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, "Freedom Rising". The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. Also, as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional discourse, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contain diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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