



Foodways of Enslavement at James Madison's Montpelier

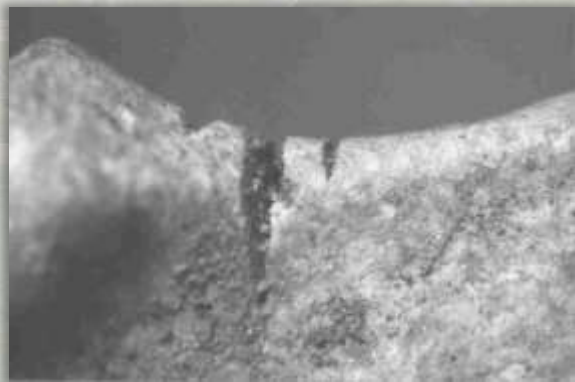
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Research Themes:

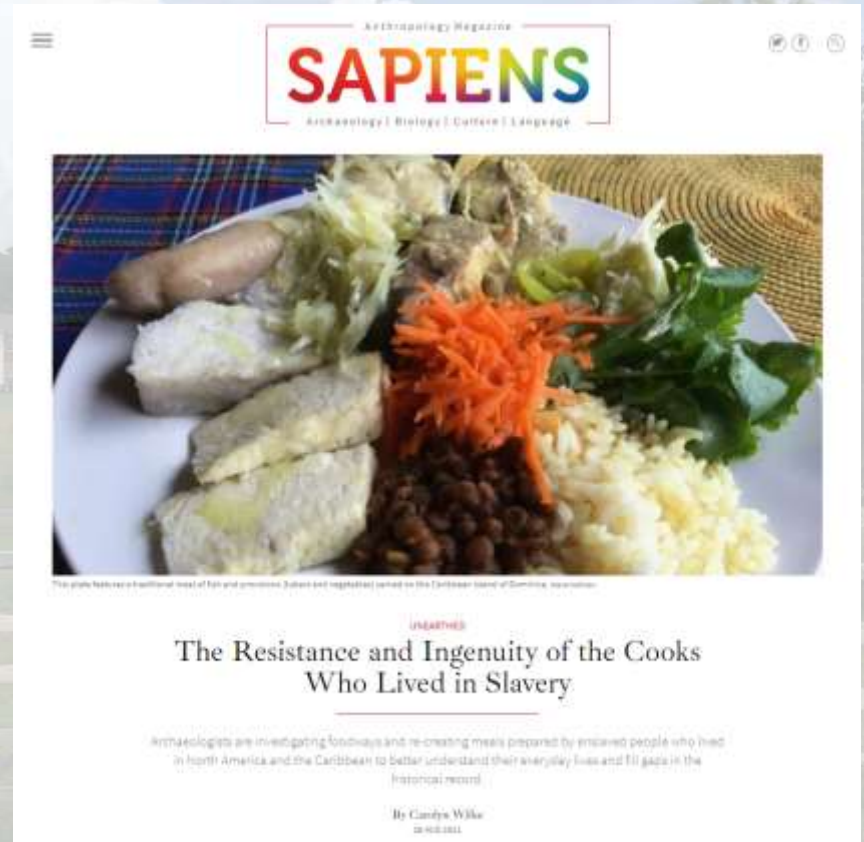
- Intersections of ecology and economy in human responses to social, environmental, and political stressors
 - Native American resilience through settler colonialism, and
 - African-American resilience in the context of enslavement, and the genesis of American (esp. “Southern”) foodways
 - Today’s subject!
- Caveats



Skinning mark on deer astragalus

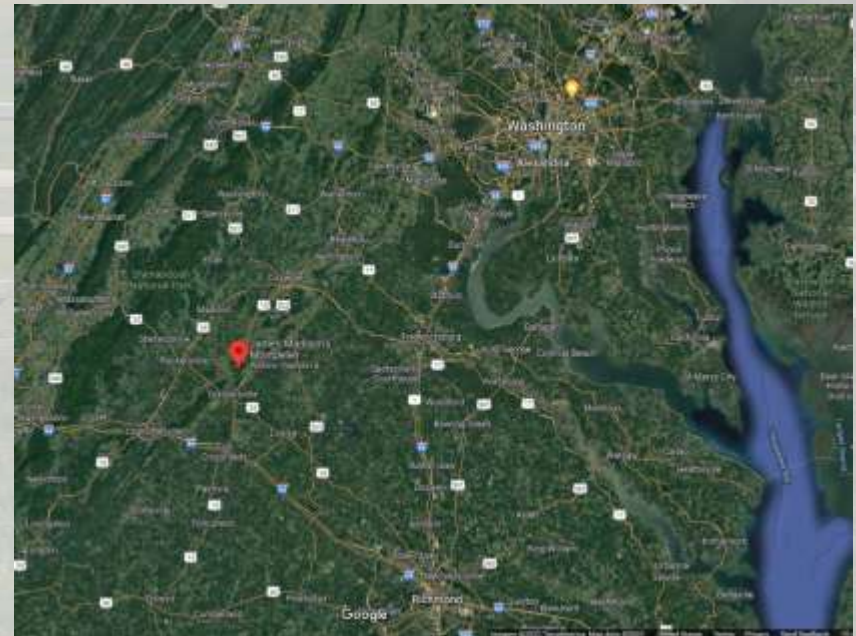
Foodways and Enslavement

- Enslaved cooks combined African, Native American, and European foodways
- Enslaved people exercised as much control as possible within exploitative system
- Most enslaved cooks were women



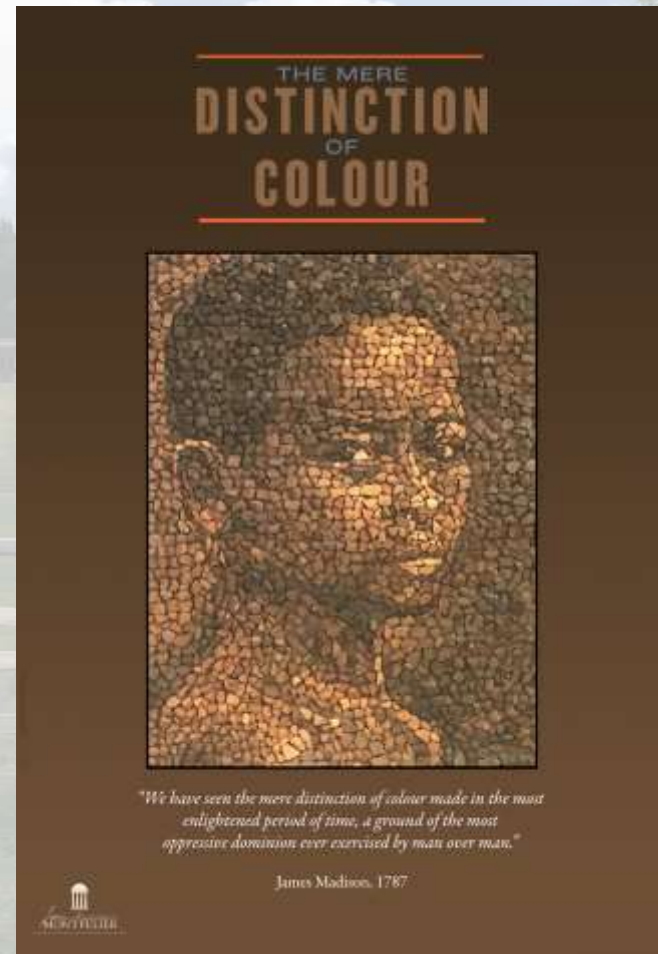
Montpelier

- Orange, Virginia
- Home of fourth U.S. president James Madison, Jr., “Father of the Constitution”
- Over 300 men, women, and children enslaved at Montpelier
- Madison never freed anyone he enslaved



Montpelier History

- 1723: First enslaved Africans brought to Montpelier by Ambrose Madison
 - James Madison, Sr. born
- 1751: James Madison, Jr. born
- 1801: James inherits plantation from his father
- 1809-1817: Presidency
- 1836: Madison dies, most enslaved people sold away to pay debts, separating families



Erased Labor



"Portrait of **George Washington's Cook**",
Gilbert Stuart (ca. 1795-1797)

"Bouillon a la James Madison. Two gallons of water, throw in every bone you have (ham bones are excellent), with three good sized carrots, three onions, celery, a can of tomatoes. Salt and pepper pod to taste. Simmer, closely covered, all day and all night. The next morning strain into a large bowl. If in a hurry set bowl in cold water, otherwise put in cellar or on ice. Remove the grease very carefully. Cut up fine, size of dice, three pounds of rump of beef, take two eggs and break them over the cut meat, yolk and white. Stir freely. Add celery, salt and pepper, pour the bouillon on it, settle it on the fire, stir until the froth rises. Skim off very carefully, strain off through a nice clean cloth or flannel. Set aside for use. When ready to serve, warm the quantity desired, throw in small pieces of celery, cover closely, throw a bunch of chervil and a glass of good sherry in the soup according to taste.

– Cook, born in James Madison's family."

(Eustis and Herndon 2014 [1903])

Documentary Record

- Many documents destroyed
- Enslaved cooks:
 - Ailsey Payne (~1806-1890): cook for 30 years
 - Catherine Taylor
 - Ellen Stewart White
 - Winnie Stewart

“How to Serve Chicken. Wash your chicken, dry with a nice clean cloth, put it in a tray of salt and water to cover ten minutes, dry it and salt and pepper and flour it well, throw it in a pan of hot lard, hot enough to make it a golden brown, when done lay it on a piece of very clean paper to absorb the grease. Throw off the top grease, put a handful of flour, stir to a brown, add to it a pint of stock, stir and strain, then put your chicken in and let it simmer slowly until the chicken gets soft; make a nice pot of mush, let it get cold, cut it and fry and serve with the chicken. Fry Jerusalem artichokes and let them simmer with the fricassee; this is also delicious.

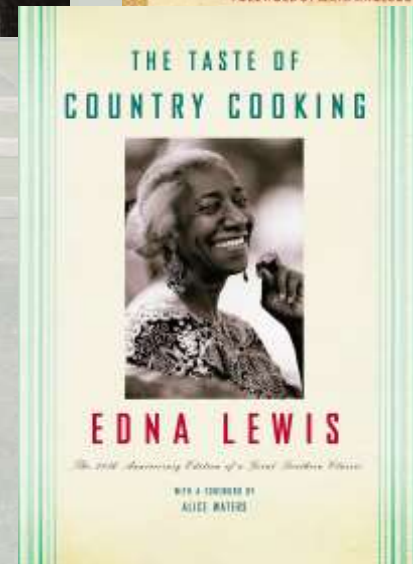
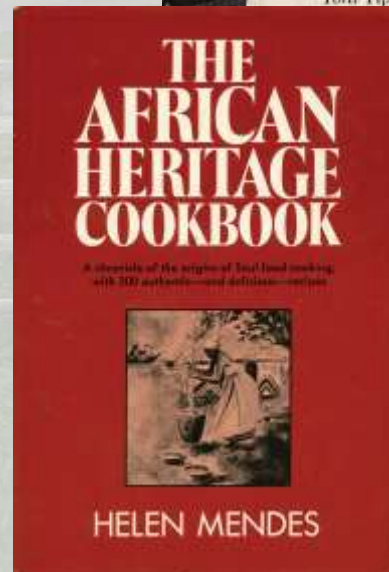
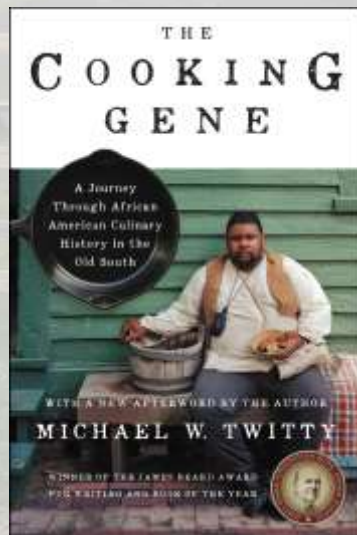
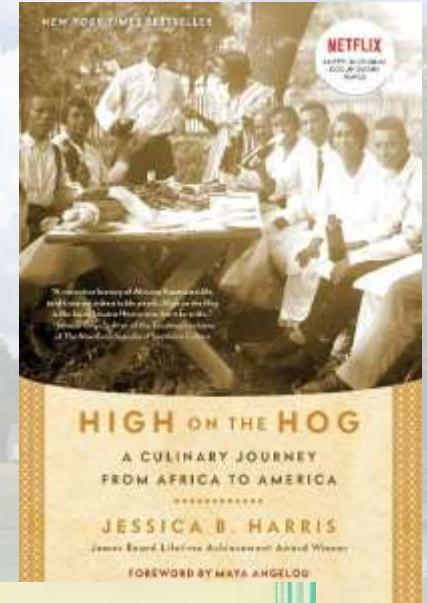
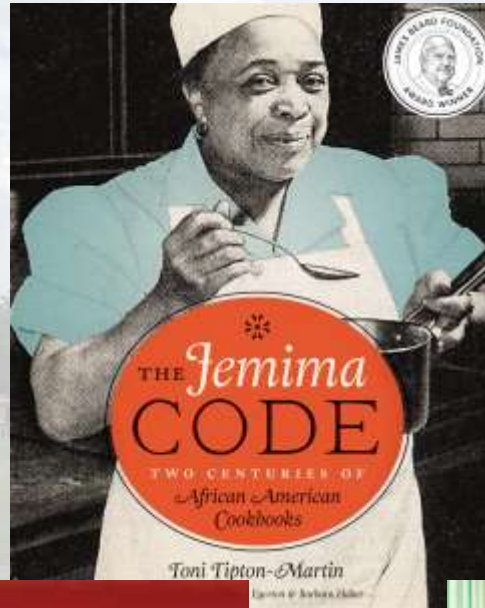
– Ellen White, Mrs. Madison’s Cook,”

(Eustis and Herndon 2014 [1903])

John Payne Todd: “I rose & breakfasted on Cabbage fried, Coffee without sugar [having] none, & tea cornbread & butter & likewise part of a herring belonging to some unknown furnished by Winney”
(Montpelier Foundation 2017, 50)

Contemporary Scholarship

- Toni Tipton-Martin
- Jessica Harris
- Edna Lewis
- Michael Twitty
- Helen Mendes



Overarching Goals

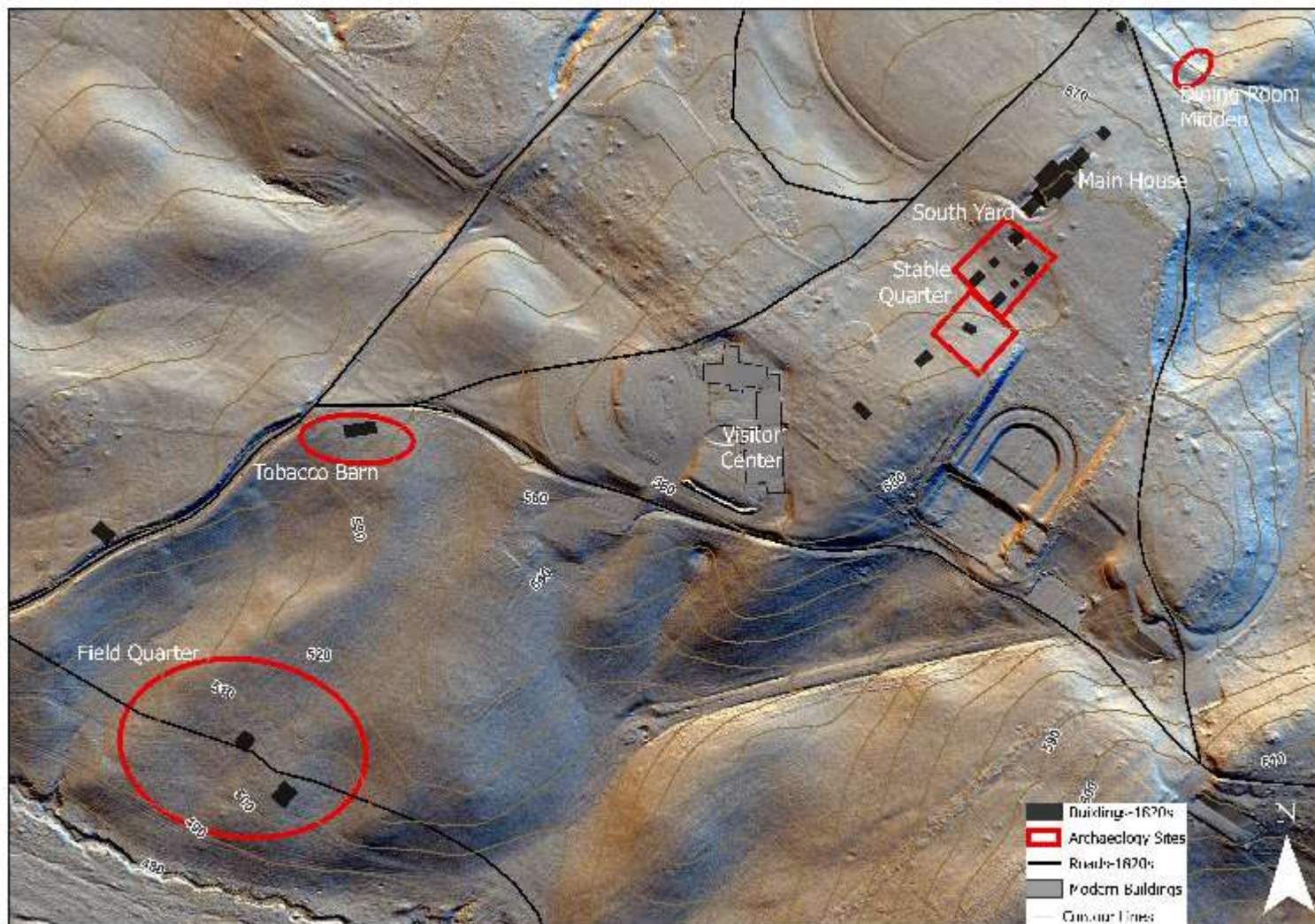
- Enslaved foodways not monolithic
- Produce scholarship that is useful to Black food scholars, and descendent communities



Staff and descendants excavating South Yard at Montpelier. Photo by Eduardo Montes Bradley.

Research Questions

- Did enslaved people eat similarly across the plantation?
- Did they hunt or purchase their own food?
- Did they eat lower quality meat than the Madisons?



Sites sampled for Faunal Analysis

Hist Arch
https://doi.org/10.1007/s41636-018-0113-z



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Dining with the Madisons: Elite Consumption at Montpelier

Barnet Pavao-Zuckerman · Derek T. Anderson ·
Matthew Reeves

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Abstract Recent research at James Madison's Montpelier permits exploration of shifts in cuisine practices relating to the emergence of American cultural sensibilities, as well as in response to the greater international visibility and increased social and economic status of the household following Madison's term as United States president. Prior to the presidency, zooarchaeological remains indicate that the household consumed high-quality cuts of meat from domesticated livestock, but that wild game also contributed significantly to the diet. After the presidency, costly meat cuts continued to be served on a well-appointed Madison table, but the overall diversity of the meat-based portion of the diet was reduced. The household increasingly focused its dietary strategy on a few locally produced, high-quality meats, likely in order to efficiently feed the many guests that visited Montpelier. Although English and French elite influences on cuisine are visible in the written record and material culture from Montpelier, the zooarchaeological

evidence reflects the emergence of a distinctly American cuisine.

Extracto Un estudio reciente llevado a cabo en James Madison's Montpelier nos permite explorar los cambios en las prácticas culinarias en relación con la emergencia de una conciencia cultural estadounidense, así como en respuesta a una mayor visibilidad internacional y un estatus social y económico destacado de la residencia tras el mandato de Madison como presidente de EE. UU. Con anterioridad a su mandato, los restos zooarqueológicos indican que la residencia presidencial consumía cortes de carne de gran calidad procedente de la explotación ganadera, aunque la caza representaba una parte importante de la dieta. Tras su etapa como presidente, una mesa de Madison bien provista contaba invariablemente con costosas piezas de carne, aunque en general la variedad de la porción cárnica de la dieta se vio reducida. La estrategia alimentaria de la residencia fue aumentando su interés por una serie bastante reducida de carnes de gran calidad y producción local, con toda probabilidad para poder alimentar de manera adecuada a los numerosos invitados que visitaban Montpelier. Aunque se observan refinadas influencias de las gastronomías inglesa y francesa en los registros escritos y en la cultura de los materiales de Montpelier, los restos zooarqueológicos reflejan la emergencia de una cocina estadounidense bien diferenciada.

Résumé Des recherches récentes réalisées à la propriété Montpelier de James Madison permettent d'explorer la transition des pratiques culinaires associée

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African American Culinary History and the Genesis of American Cuisine: Foodways and Slavery at Montpelier

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and Marybeth Harte^e

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ABSTRACT

American Southern foodways emerged in large part within the kitchens of slave plantations, where enslaved Black cooks incorporated African, Native American, and European practices and foods to create distinctly American food traditions. We use animal remains excavated from James Madison's Montpelier to illuminate early American cuisines in the Virginia piedmont. Black foodways at Montpelier were not monolithic. Pork and beef were the dominant meats consumed by all enslaved community members, and all communities supplemented their rations with their own subsistence pursuits to some extent. However, differential access to time, technology, and contact with white enslavers led to disparate circumstances for enslaved communities in terms of their relative reliance on rationed meats versus wild game, particularly fish.

KEY WORDS

Slavery; foodways; cuisine; zooarchaeology; Montpelier; Virginia; plantations; US Southeast

In the icehouses, we had mutton, beef, chickens, turkeys, ducks, shoats and most everything you can think of.

– Ailsey Payne, cook enslaved at Montpelier (Unknown 1902)

The genesis of American Southern cuisines is found within the kitchens of slave plantations, where enslaved Black cooks brought African, Native American, and European food traditions together to create a diversity of uniquely American cuisines. Enslaved cooks combined African and European culinary traditions with knowledge and techniques acquired through early encounters with Native communities to create novel American recipes and dishes using locally available ingredients. The cuisines that emerged from the hands and labor of enslaved cooks anchor American culinary traditions, although “ownership” of these traditions has been historically contested and racialized (Deetz 2017; Tang 2014; Twitty 2017).

Black chefs, culinary historians, and journalists including Jessica Harris (1999, 2011), Edna Lewis (2006), Helen Mendes (1971), Frederick Douglass Opie (2008), Toni Tipton-Martin (2014, 2015), Michael Twitty (2017), and Psyche Williams-Forsen (2006, 2014) place foodways and food histories firmly within discussions of race, class, gender, and

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Zooarchaeology Quantitative Indices



NISP: Number of Identified Specimens (bone count)

MNI: Minimum Number of Individuals

Biomass: Meat Weight

Species List

Fish:

- Herring
- Catfish
- Carps and suckers
- Sunfish

Reptiles/Amphibians:

- *Frogs
- Snapping turtle
- River cooter
- Box turtle
- *Venomous snake

Birds:

- Ducks
- Chickens
- Turkey
- Mourning dove



Shellfish:

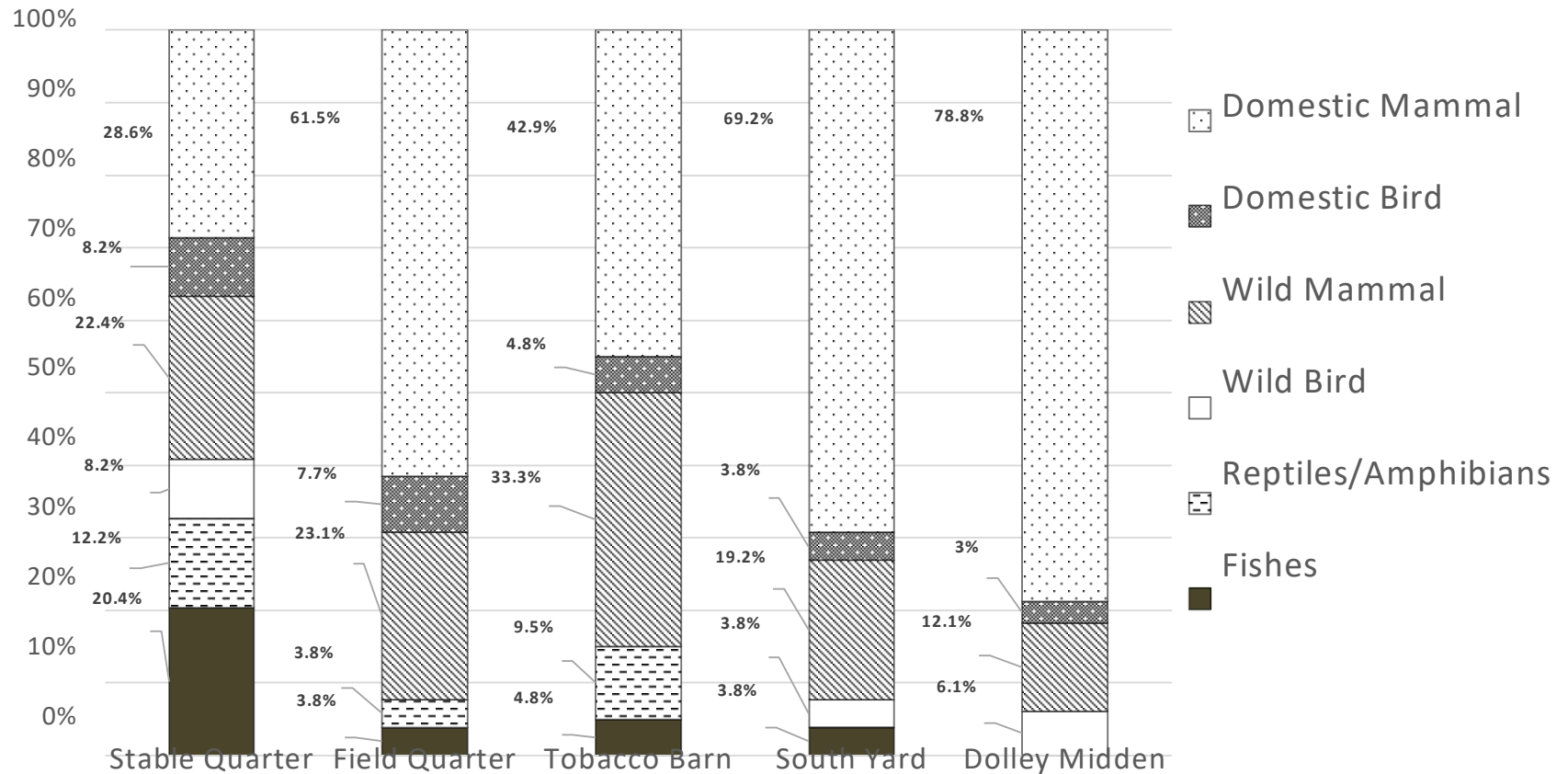
- Oyster

Mammals:

- Opossum
- *Mole
- Jackrabbit/cottontail rabbit
- *Rats/mice
- Squirrel
- Woodchuck
- *Skunk
- Raccoon
- *House cat
- Deer
- Sheep/goat
- Pig
- Cattle
- *Horse (but butchered?)

* Commensal animals (likely not consumed).

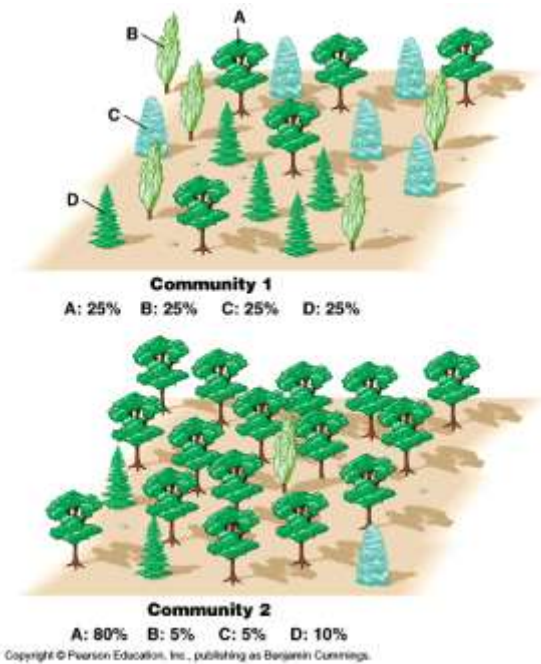
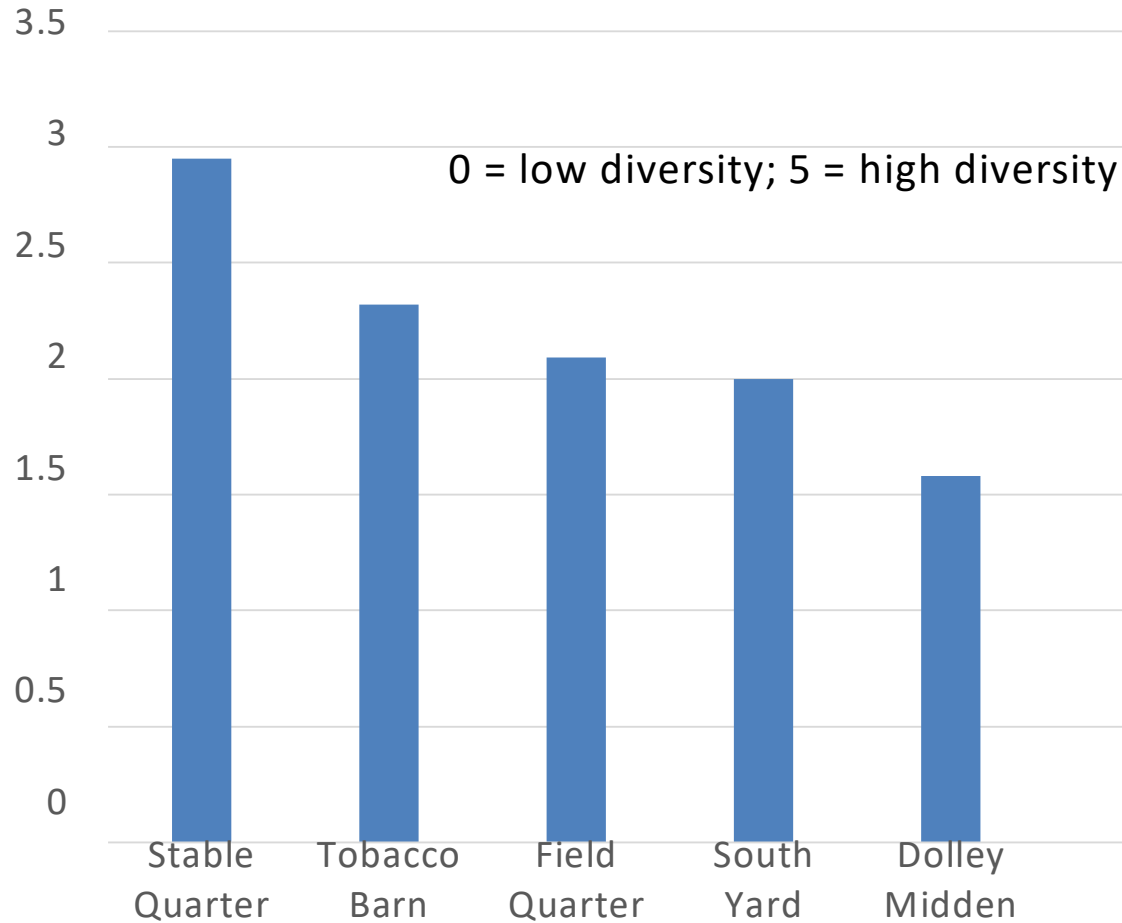
Summary of Zooarchaeological Assemblages, Montpelier (MNI)



MNI = Minimum Number of Individuals

Data from: Pavao-Zuckerman, Oliver, Reeves, Copperstone, and Harte 2021
and Pavao-Zuckerman, Anderson and Reeves 2018

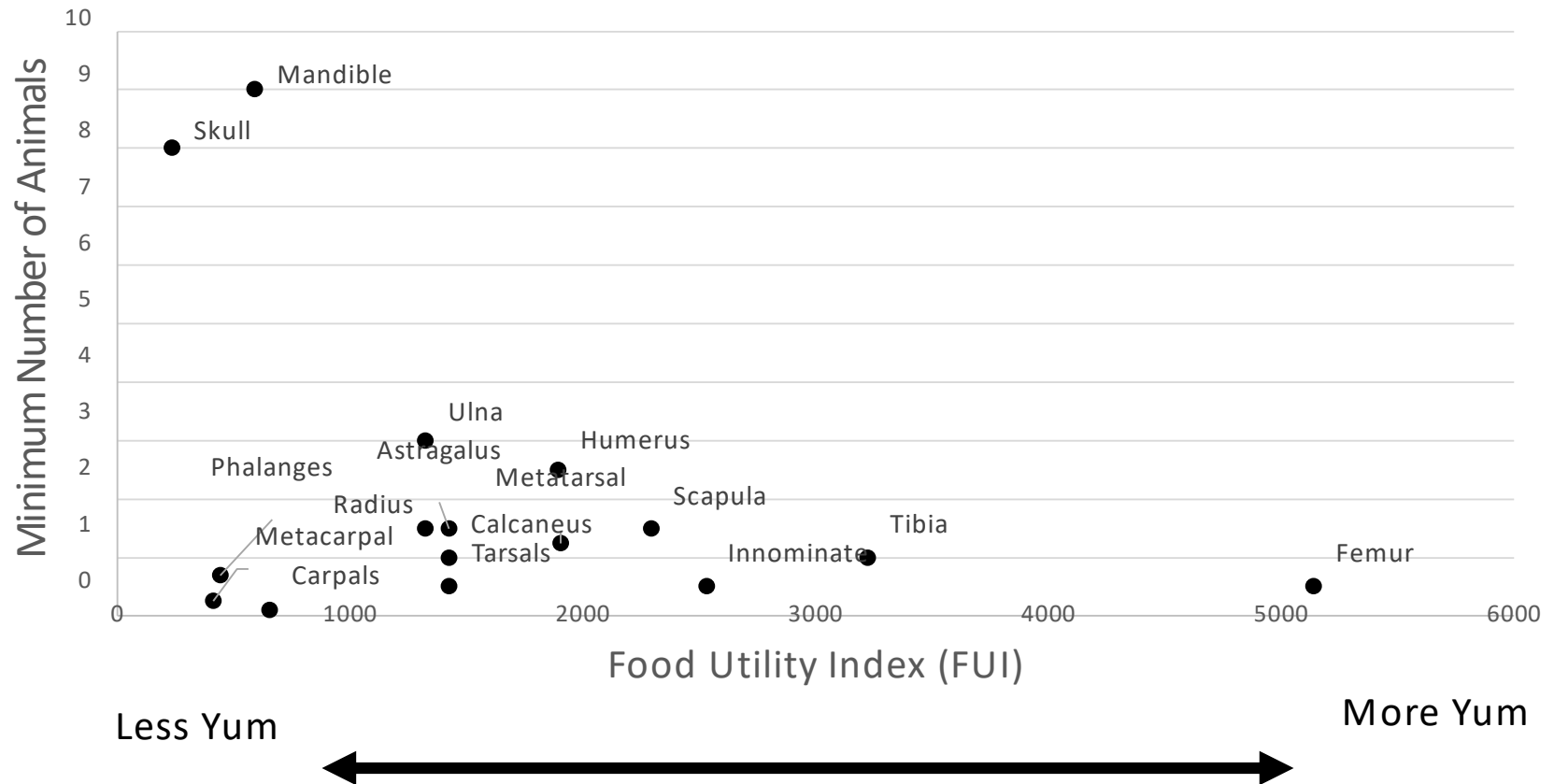
Taxonomic Diversity, Montpelier



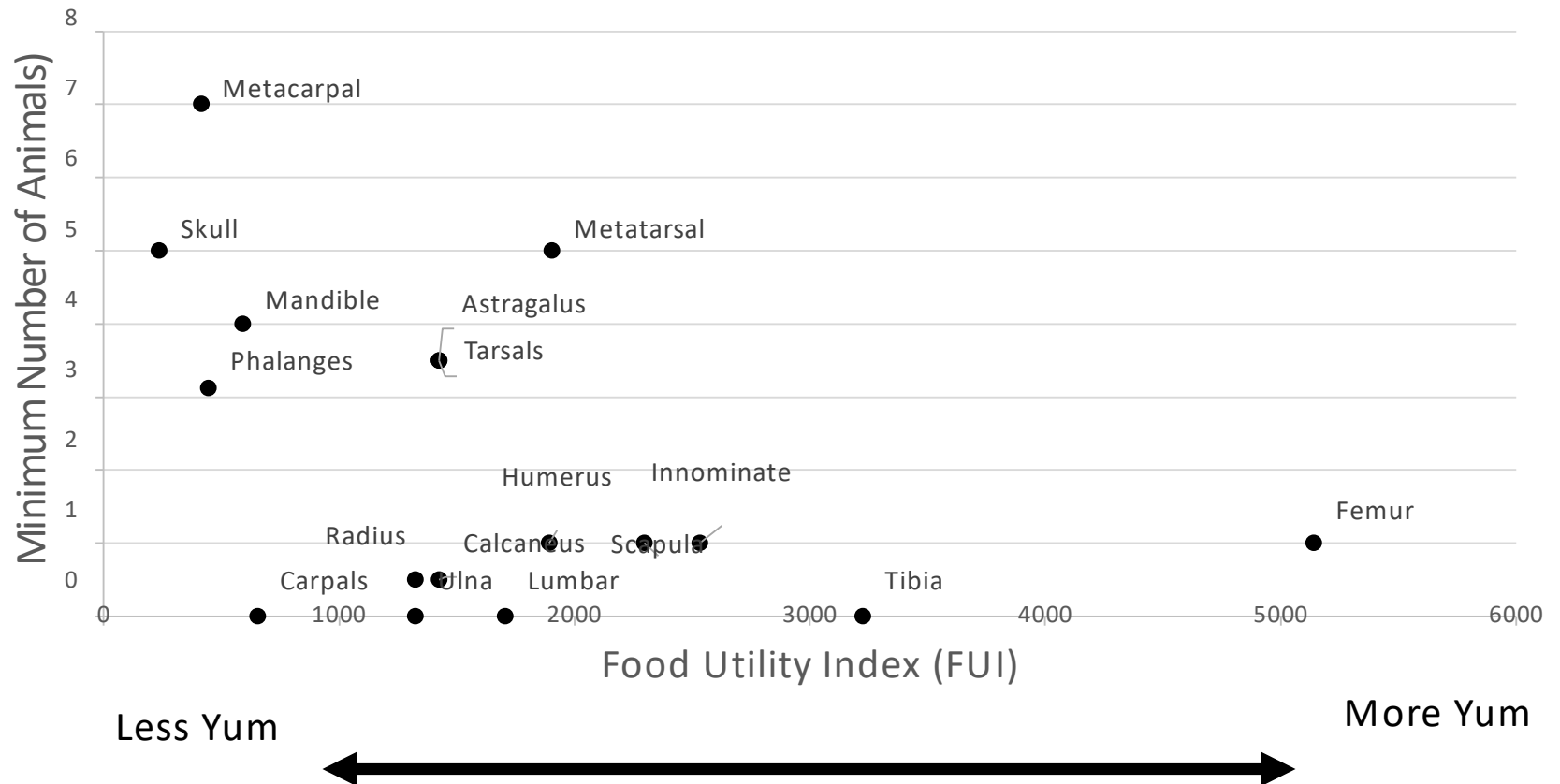
Key Takeaways:

- Labor practice (gang vs. task), locale, status influenced access to wild spaces
 - Fishing, "garden hunting", big game hunting
 - Prominence of edge-adapted species
- Stable quarter residents had most access to fish (gardener or Granny Milly?)
- Enslaved domestic workers ate closest to Madison family (rations)
 - But, does venison = hunting?

Pig Food Utility in Field Quarter (Enslaved)



Pig Food Utility in Dolley Midden (Madison)



Key Takeaways:

- Minor differences in meat quality
- Whole pigs provided as rations?
 - Consistent with other plantation sites

Conclusions

- Pork and beef dominate
- Enslaved communities had different access to wild spaces and foods
 - Creativity and ingenuity within systems of oppression
- Meat quality not very different between enslavers and enslaved
- Enslaved cooking anchors American “southern” cuisines

Acknowledgements

- ❖ Ailsey Payne
- ❖ Catherine Taylor
- ❖ Ellen Stewart White
- ❖ Winnie Stewart
- ❖ “Cook, born in James Madison’s family”
- ❖ Sawney
- ❖ Granny Milly

- Matt Reeves
- Cynthia Reusche
- The Montpelier Foundation
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- Chance Copperstone
- Alex Vindas-Cruz
- Derek Anderson
- Marybeth Harte
- Lisa Janz, Vincent LaMotta, Nicole Mathwich, Drew Webster, Diego Torres Diaz, James Dehlinger, Maya Koepke, Lauren Benz, Ellen Platts, Angela Bailey