

Natural Selections

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

And for Dessert....

AILEEN MARSHALL

When you think of an iconic New York City dessert, most people think of cheesecake. Some form of cheesecake has been around for thousands of years, with many countries having their own style or flair. Not everyone agrees on how the New York City style originated, evolving to have a cream cheese base and a graham cracker crust, which makes it rich, smooth, and creamy.

The earliest cheesecake, known as “*libum*,” was created in Greece on the island of Samos. Archeologists have dated cheesecake pans from Greece to around 2000 B.C. It is said that cheesecake was fed to the first Olympians in 776 B.C. to give them strength. The first recorded recipe appears in *De Agricultura* around 234 B.C., written by historian and senator Marcus Porcius Cato. The recipe calls for pounding cheese until it is smooth, adding honey and wheat flour, and then baking it. When Rome conquered Greece in the second century B.C., they discovered this cheesecake and spread it throughout the rest of the Roman Empire.

Over the centuries, many countries developed their own type of cheesecake. Regional versions vary based on ingredients, textures, and setting by refrigeration or baking. Italian cheesecake is made with ricotta cheese. French cheesecake is known for its very light consistency, using Neufchâtel cheese and gelatin. In the British Isles, crushed biscuits make up the base, and the cheesecake is topped with a variety of fruit compotes. Grecians today use Mizithra, cheese made from sheep’s milk and whey, or feta. German cheesecake has a pastry dough base and uses quark, a fresh cheese made from curdled sour milk, similar to cottage cheese. Japanese cheesecake uses cornstarch and eggs and has a more cake-like texture.



A plain New York-style cheesecake.

Indian cheesecake is known as *chhena poda* and is made from cottage cheese, sugar, and nuts.

The type of cheesecakes we are familiar with in the United States are technically custards, not cakes. The New York style of cheesecake is based on cream cheese, has a crushed graham cracker base, and is served pure, without any flavorings or toppings. It is known for being very creamy but not too heavy. In Chicago you will find a sour cream based cheesecake that is soft on the inside, with a shortbread crust. Saint Louis’s cheesecake is made from butter with a layer of cake on top. California style cheesecake has a light texture with lemon flavoring, a cookie crumb crust, and sour cream topping.

Cheesecake was brought to this country by European immigrants starting in the eighteenth century. At that point, Europeans had started adding eggs instead of yeast to their recipes, giving cheesecake the consistency we know today. In 1872, Wil-

liam Lawrence, a dairy farmer from Chester, New York, tried to make the French-style Neufchâtel cheese. While trying to copy this milk-based cheese, William Lawrence added cream instead of milk, and came up with a denser and creamier form, which he dubbed cream cheese. A grocery distributor sold it for Lawrence in foil wrappers. It was eventually bought by the Kraft Company and has been sold as Philadelphia Cream Cheese since 1928.

It was the invention of cream cheese that allowed the New York style cheesecake to originate. While sources say that it is based on the Eastern European style, another claim to the origin is from our old friend Arnold Reuben, of the [reuben sandwich fame](#). He claimed that he had a cheese pie at a friend’s house one day and was so enamored with it he that took his hostess’ recipe and worked with his chef to develop what we know as the

Photo Courtesy of DLLU | WIKICOMMONS

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Photo Courtesy of SABOTRAX | WIKICOMMONS

New York cheesecake.

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New York style cheesecake. It was sold at his Turf Restaurant on 49th Street and Broadway in the 1930s. This type of cheesecake then appeared at the famous Lindy's Broadway restaurant in the 1940s. Tales say that Lindy got it from a chef he hired from Reuben's.

Yet another claim to the origin of New York style cheesecake is from the famous Junior's restaurant. The original owner, Harry Rosen, had a restaurant called Enduro Cafe at the flagship site on Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn since 1929. In 1950, he changed the name to Junior's in honor of his two sons. One son, Marvin, said that his father would ship home cheesecakes he had tasted from everywhere he went. Rosen worked with his baker, Eigel Petersen, to develop the cheesecake that is still sold in his restaurants today. In the *Village Voice* in 1973, journalist Ron Rosenblum declared, "There will never be a better cheesecake than the cheesecake they

serve at Junior's on Flatbush Avenue...it's the best cheesecake in New York." That same year it won a contest for best cheesecake run by *New York Magazine*.

Although numerous city establishments serve or sell New York style cheesecake, it is possible to make one at home. Here is a recipe from Molly O'Neil's *New York Cookbook*:

Recipe of a Lifetime: Junior's Cheesecake

- 1/4 cup graham cracker crumbs
 - 3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar
 - 3 tablespoons sifted cornstarch
 - 30 ounces (3 3/4 large packages) cream cheese, softened
 - 1 large egg
 - 1/2 cup heavy (whipping) cream
 - 3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract.
1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Generously butter the bottom and sides of an 8-inch springform pan. Lightly coat

2. In a large bowl, combine the sugar and the cornstarch. Beat in the cream cheese. Beat in the egg. Slowly drizzle in the heavy cream, beating constantly. Add the vanilla and stir well.
3. Pour the mixture into the prepared pan. Bake until the top is golden, 40 to 45 minutes. Cool in the pan on a wire rack for 3 hours.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings. ■

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Natural Expressions

Music

On Thursday, November 14th, Santa Maria Pecoraro Di Vittorio of the Rice Laboratory at Rockefeller will be performing at Weill Hall, Carnegie Hall as a violist with the Chamber Orchestra of New York. The program includes Bach's Orchestral Suite No. 1, Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, and an original work by Salvatore di Vittorio, the conductor of the orchestra. The evening will feature a performance by violinist and Respighi Prize awardee, Irene Abrigo. The event begins at 7:30 p.m. and tickets (\$40-50 gen-

eral admission, \$30 students) can be purchased [online](#).

Collette Ryder of The Rockefeller University Office of Sponsored Programs Administration will be singing with the New York Choral Society in "Wisdom Sees a Light Draw Near" at St. Bartholomew's Church at 8 p.m. on Friday, November 15th. The chorus will perform Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Op. 45 and the East coast premiere of Frank Ticheli's *Until Forever Fades Away*. Tickets (\$40) can be purchased from the [New York Choral Society](#) (contact [Ryder](#) for discounts).

Digital

This month, Bernie Langs of The Rockefeller University Development Office releases a new music video, "My Beautiful Friend." Acting as video director, composer, and performer, Langs crafts a piece inspired by legendary artists David Bowie and The Beach Boys. The video can be viewed on Langs' YouTube page [here](#).

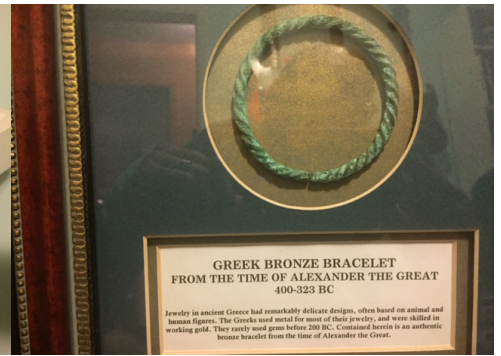
Email Megan E. Kelley at mkelley@rockefeller.edu to submit your art/music/performance/sporting/other event for next month's "Natural Expressions" and follow @NatSelections on Twitter for more events.

Culture Corner

Collecting Art

BERNIE LANGS

I've been acquiring works of art for most of my life, starting with the 1960s-style posters that graced the walls of my childhood bedroom. If you keep an eye out at galleries and book/gift shops, you can purchase some great and affordable pieces that will brighten living and work spaces, keeping you artistically and aesthetically satisfied for years. Here are some of my favorite works that I have on display at home and in my office.



Ancient Roman artifacts (left) and Ancient Greek bronze bracelet (right).



My favorite (and the rarest) piece in my collection is this beautifully detailed watercolor design for a stained glass window that was created by Heaton, Butler and Bayne, an English firm that produced such windows from 1862 to 1953. One afternoon in the 1980s, I acquired it at a Manhattan gallery owned by the late Spencer Samuels. I found his staff packing up to move locations and there were several unframed window designs made by the firm on the floor waiting to be wrapped up. When I expressed an interest in them, they let me purchase this one at a huge discount, much to the amusement of the owner. The scene is of Christ healing the sick with a typical English harbor in the background, complete with ships with masts. It was most likely painted in the late 1800s as a design for a church in the United Kingdom. Westminster Abbey includes a Heaton, Butler and Bayne window, installed in 1868.

Left: These ancient Roman artifacts from 100-350 AD were mostly purchased at the Antiquarium Ltd. Fine Arts Gallery at 790 Madison Avenue. Left to right: coin of the Imperial Emperor Constantine (he reigned from 337-350 A.D.); bronze horse head; perfume bottle with a wonderful patina; terracotta doll's head for a child; and

Roman oil lamp. Right: Bronze bracelet from Greece cast in 400-323 B.C., purchased from the Sadigh Gallery Ancient Art, Inc. These ancient works are affordable since there are many scattered around Europe.



My family commissioned this painting, *Still Life with Fruit*, from the talented artist Walter Rondiak. It is incredible—the light striking both the fruit and the platform, the varying dimensions, the reflections, and so on. It is the first work of art visible upon entering my home. I find it as intellectually exciting as paintings in this genre by Cezanne and Chardin.



I have purchased several Japanese Edo-era woodblock prints in the Ukiyo-e style from the Ronin Gallery on 57th Street both for my own collection and as gifts. They have high end prints as well as

affordable designs. The small woodblock on the above is from a series, *The 53 Stations of the Takaido* by the great Master, Hiroshige (d. 1858). The larger print to the below is by his pupil and son-in-law, Hiroshige II (1826-1869).



This rendering (with detail) of *The Electric Light in Madison Square, New York*, is a colored page from the January

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14th, 1882 edition of *Harper's Weekly*. The image was made by artist Charles Graham shortly after arc lighting systems became implemented in cities. My wife and I bought it at the Summa Art Gallery in Brooklyn Heights in the early 1990s.



This large print with its deep, rich colors and gloriously sublime view of the hills of Tuscany was bought from the inventory of an art dealer and auction service on a cruise ship. It is the centerpiece of my living room and every guest to my home is struck by its beauty.

Used book stores often have collections of affordable old magazines, posters, and prints. This map of England and Wales was published in 1790. I bought it from the Old Book Shop in Morristown, New Jersey. The prices of such maps vary



from about fifty to several hundred dollars. The store also maintains a large collection of vintage postcards of great variety, mostly under five dollars each. The maps and the postcards make for creative gift giving.



Nine years ago, I visited one of Rome's National Museums and was stunned to sit in a large room graced on each wall by frescoes depicting faux foliage for the subterranean dining room of the famous Villa of Livia (30-20 B.C.). The decoration was created to give the illusion by the patroness of outdoor dining for her guests. I found this poster of a section of the landscape in the gift shop for the Roman Forum and I keep it on display in my home office as inspiration for my creative works.



Romano - British Enamelled Disc brooch
Wheel motif
2nd cent. AD
Found near Brighton

An Anglo-Roman brooch from about 200 A.D. showcased on a shelf next to a fabulous Joe Namath/New York Jets commemorative Super Bowl III plate that my brother-in-law gave me. The brooch and the Jets' appearance in a Super Bowl are both ancient history!



Signed (bottom right) poster for a stunning 1986 exhibition of large black and white photos taken by Philip Trager of villas in Italy designed by the architect Palladio. There was a book produced for the exhibit as well and I recently chanced upon a used copy at The Chatham Book-seller, LLC in Madison, New Jersey, which I gave to a friend who has long admired the poster.

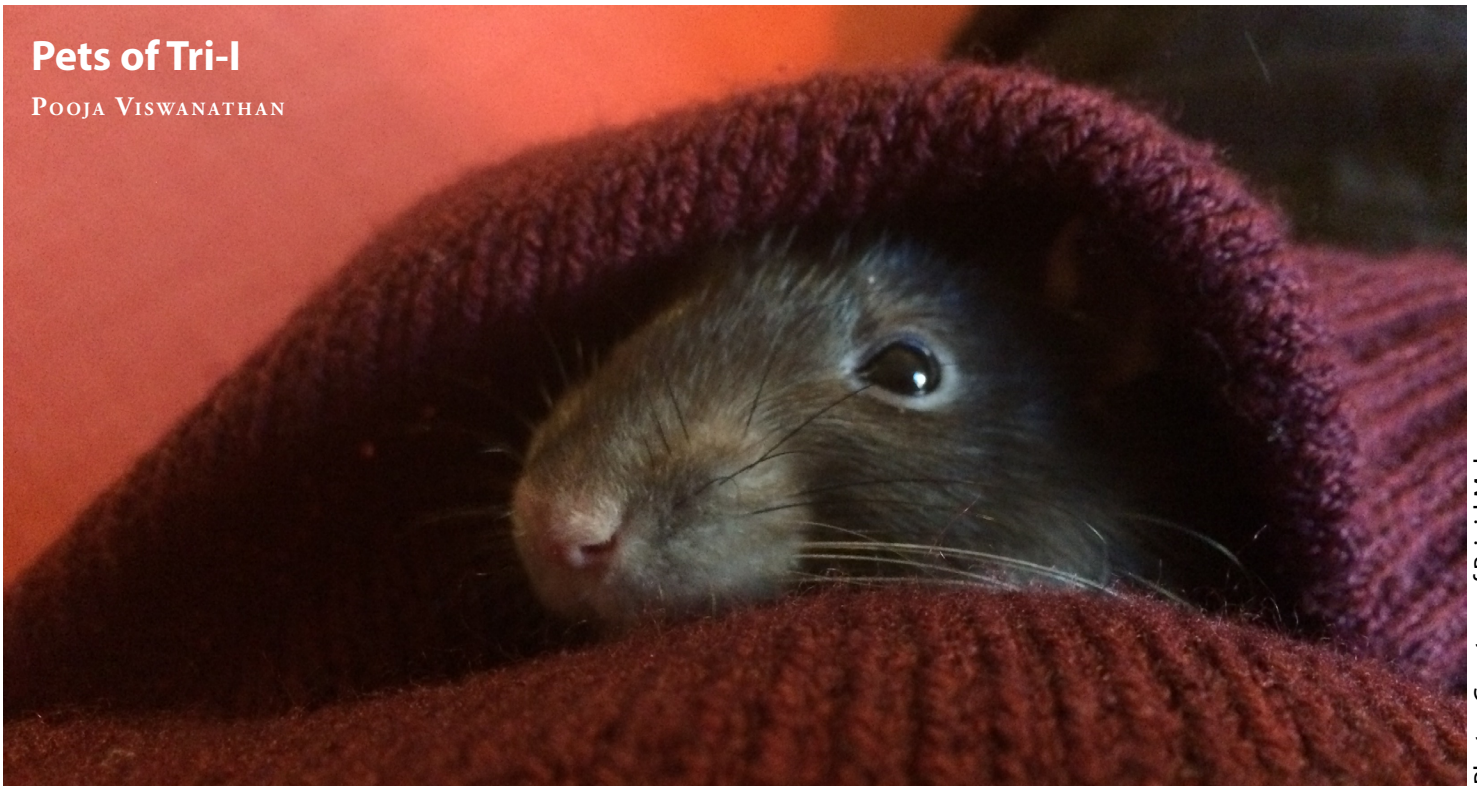


My daughter, Jordan, made this linoleum cut print of a relaxing cup of hot chocolate while she was a middle school student. It was recognized with a Scholastic Art Award at a ceremony for students at the Morris Art Museum in New Jersey. We have it hanging in a hallway at home next to prints and posters from Italy and framed family photos. ■

All photos by Bernie Langs

Pets of Tri-I

POOJA VISWANATHAN



Photos Courtesy of Brigid Maloney

For this issue, I interviewed **Luna**, the rat who lives with **Brigid Maloney** (Jarvis & Magnasco Labs, The Rockefeller University) and her partner, Brandon. I think rats make great pets and I wanted to meet Luna ever since I first heard about her from Brigid.

Pooja Viswanathan: How old are you? In human years?

Luna: I am 2.5 years old, which makes me a pretty senior rat!

PV: Is there a story behind your name?

L: Luna is the name I came with when I was adopted, but usually my folks call me Looney Toon since I run around the apartment looking for snacks all the time.

PV: What is your first memory?

L: Probably when I was adopted and came home for the first day! I remember all of the new smells and meeting my parents, who gave me a welcome home chocolate chip, my favorite!

PV: Where do you live?

L: I live in a big 3 story cage in a little studio apartment with my humans. Comparably, my cage is much bigger to me than their apartment is to them!

PV: If you could live anywhere else in the world, where would you live?

L: Probably in the kitchen cabinets so I

could have unlimited access to the full pantry!

PV: What are your favorite foods?

L: I love human food and any time my humans make anything tasty, they usually give me a little bite! My favorites are pizza crusts, but I also love chocolate chips, oatmeal, and above all else, bananas!

PV: What is your favorite weekend activity in NYC?

L: Snoozing late all morning, then running around the couch and snuggling with my humans while they fold laundry or watch tv, and then building big nests with loud crunchy paper all night long!

PV: Besides your human roomies, do you know other humans in the Tri-I community?

L: I get to meet all of the humans who visit our apartment! Some of them seem a little nervous when they first meet me, but I usually have them eating out of my hand (or rather, I am eating out of theirs) within a few minutes.

PV: Do you have a funny story to share with us?

L: One time, my humans went to the cage to make sure I had enough food before they went to work, and realized I wasn't there! They tore the apartment apart looking for me and were worried I was lost, until all of the sudden, they heard a crunching noise coming from mom's backpack, and then they realized I had found my way in and was trying to




break into her lunch box! Alas, I was foiled again!

PV: Is there some way we can see more pictures of you on the interwebs?

L: Sometimes I am gracious enough to make an appearance on my mom's Instagram, @Brigid_m.

PV: If you could have any human ability, what would it be?

L: Definitely thumbs to open jars and the ability to reach the fridge by myself! ■



Life on a Roll
Philharmonie de Paris

ELODIE PAUWELS

<https://elodiephoto.wordpress.com/>

Philharmonie 1 is a symphonic concert hall which opened in January 2015 and is part of the Philharmonie de Paris. Its architect, Jean Nouvel, used interlaced aluminum panels and sophisticated tessellation that will make your head spin, especially if you reach the rooftop to admire the view. ■

Life on a Roll Guangzhou

ANNA KACZYNSKA

Guangzhou is located in the south of China. Everyone I asked said that it is the place to enjoy Cantonese food. You will not be disappointed. It has many local restaurants, but street food is amazing and highly recommended. Besides the cuisine, temples, and parks, you can find the famous Opera House designed by Zaha Hadid as well as the famous Canton Tower standing tall above Pearl River. With over 14 million people in Guangzhou, you will never feel alone.. ■





Lotfollah Mosque


Shah Mosque

Life on a Roll **INSIDE IRAN:** **BLUE WIND OF ISFAHAN**

NAN PANG

Isfahan, once called “half the world,” was the capital of Persia during Safavid dynasty. In the vast Naghsh-e Jahan Square, the Shah Mosque greets visitors with its gorgeous symmetry and heavenly blue tiles. Lotfollah Mosque, one of the architectural masterpieces of the Safavid Empire, is just a few steps from the Shah Mosque. The breathtaking arabesque patterns on the dome are almost synonymous with Isfahan.

At twilight, taking a walk to the Khaju Bridge is a great idea. Locals gather under its beautiful arches and hold nightly singing competitions. Their welcoming songs echo across the bridge, and transcend any language barriers. ■



Khaju Bridge