

Christiana Campbell's



WILLIAMSBURG, October 3, 1771.

“ I beg leave to acquaint the Publick that I have opened TAVERN in the House, behind the Capitol, lately occupied by *Mrs. Vobe*; where those Gentlemen who please to favour me with their Custom may depend upon genteel accommodations, and the very best entertainment. I shall reserve rooms for the Gentlemen who formerly lodged with me.”

— ***CHRISTIANA CAMPBELL***



WHEN Christiana Campbell announced her new location in the *Virginia Gazette*, she was already an experienced tavern keeper, having learned the business from her father. After her husband, apothecary Ebenezer Campbell, died in the mid-1750s leaving Christiana with two young daughters, she opened a tavern in Williamsburg to support her family.

George Washington and other leading gentlemen of the colony who periodically came to town for business, politics, or pleasure often met with local residents at Mrs. Campbell's tavern. They dined, supped, or spent the evening drinking, visiting, and gambling in the public room or in another first-floor room. Lodgers who reserved a private room slept upstairs in a chamber adjoining the public lodging room, where travelers shared beds with strangers when the tavern was crowded.

Informal groups of gentlemen and the Williamsburg Masonic Lodge met in the private club room in the 1770s. Lodge records indicate that the Masons occasionally hosted balls at the tavern. In December 1776, for instance, they agreed to “dine and Sup and have a Ball for the Entertainment of the Ladies at the House of Mrs. Campbell's as usual.”

Well-run taverns flourished in Williamsburg while it was the capital of Virginia. Mrs. Campbell retired around 1780 rather than follow the government when it moved to Richmond. A traveler stopped at her house one February day in 1783 and requested a fire in the room and “Oysters Cook'd any way.” Mrs. Campbell retorted, “I don't keep a house of entertainment, nor have not for some years.” The disappointed traveler described Mrs. Campbell as “a little old Woman, about four feet high; & equally thick, a little turn up Pug nose, a mouth screw'd up to one side.”

Mrs. Campbell eventually moved to Fredericksburg, where she died in 1792 at the age of 70.

Today Christiana Campbell's Tavern specializes in seafood. Artifacts found during excavation of the site and a sketch of the tavern drawn on a late 18th-century insurance policy aided in reconstructing the tavern. The deliberate mix of reproduction chairs, tables and case pieces represents the kind of furniture that Mrs. Campbell owned. The dinnerware is based on fragments of an 18th-century squirrel pattern excavated in Williamsburg. Other accessories—pewter and brass candlesticks, tin sconces, and framed prints and maps—are typical of those that would have been used in an establishment like Mrs. Campbell's, which was neither the most elegant nor the most common tavern in town.



Christiana Campbell's TAVERN

Evening BILL of FARE

Good Corner Dishes

***Green Pease Soup without Meat 10**

When your pease are boil'd enough, put thyme and sweet marjoram, a little mint... and green onion shred fine... add some white toasts neatly cut and the young pease
(*Dictionarium Domesticum, Nathan Bailey, 1736*)

***Lettuces from the Garden 13**

Dressed with ver jus and the finest Italian oil
(*Inspired by Thomas Jefferson's acclaimed 250 varieties of greens at Monticello*)

***Oysters**

From the waters of the Chesapeake region, Mrs. Campbell's oysters are grown in the pristine waters of Virginia. These exclusive locations continue to grace the table and were famously enjoyed by George Washington.

***On the Half Shell 19**

Mushroom catsup & allegar mignonette/nasturtium
(*Campbell's Tavern Original, 2022*)

***Farced Oysters 19**

Having open'd your oysters, add to them greens minc'd small and boiled in cream and smoked streak... place some on each and strew with buttered crumb
(*Inspired by, The Court and Country Cook, Massialot, 1702*)

Made Dishes

Mrs. Campbell kindly recommends that you may add the following to any entrée

Soup or Salad and Dessert 17

Buttered Crab or Shrimp 22

***Mrs. Campbell's Fried Chicken 35**

Marinate your chicken after it is clean of feathers... dip't in flour strewn with salt pepper... fried quickly. Serv'd up with good ham
(*A Colonial Williamsburg Favorite*)

Crab Cakes 49

When boil'd clean the best flakes from the crab, add to it egg, onions shred fine, bread crumbs & season it well
(*A Campbell's Tavern Original*)

***To Fry Fish 38**

The great art of frying fish is to have it free from grease... the fish should be dipped in egg, then in bread crumbs
(*Recipes from the Personal cookbook of Thomas Jefferson, beginning in 1788*)

***A Seafood Pye 54**

Make a good crust... boil two pounds of fish add to it scallops, shrimp and lobster in the same manner, shred fine lemon peel and sweet herbs and put in wine, a piece of butter... close it up. Send to table with gravy made of the lobster bones
(*Campbell's Original, inspired by The Universal Cook; Or Lady's Complete Assistant, John Townshend, 1773*)

***To Broil Beef Steaks 58**

The best steaks are cut from the middle... let the fire be very clear and quick... season them with pepper and salt, when they are enough lay them in the dish and rub a bit of butter over them
(*The Lady's Assistant, Charlotte Mason, 1777*)

***Potato Dumplings in the Italian Manner 30**

Put your potatoes to boil and strew it with pepper and salt as much as you like... roll in fine flour and cut into dumplings. Serve with sweet herbs and the peel of lemon chopped fine... brown with butter and send it to table with pretty vegetables from the garden
(*A Campbell's Tavern Original*)

* – The indicated items can be prepared gluten-free. Please ask your server.