As our “founding foodie” and “the only American epicurean president” has had a lasting impact on our culinary consciousness. Food writers cite Jefferson's views and culinary practices in all kinds of stories about our national cuisine.

Jefferson's tastes were informed by his time in France, and his tasting notes from his tour of Southern France and Northern Italy — the first detailed modern accounts of wine in English — remain valuable to wine drinkers today.

Jefferson once called wine a “necessary of life” and imported wine from Europe for both the President’s House and Monticello. His guests frequently praised his selections; one wrote, “His wine was truly the best I ever drank, particularly his champaign [sic] — it is delicious indeed.” Ever the plant pioneer, Jefferson also grew a wide variety of grapes at Monticello and fervently believed that “we could in the United States, make as great a variety of wines as are made in Europe, not exactly the same kinds, but doubtless as good.”

Today, guests can tour Monticello’s culinary spaces and gardens, and celebrate Jefferson’s legacy as a revolutionary gardener and “founding foodie” at the Heritage Harvest Festival every September. Monticello historians continue to mine family letters and manuscripts for recipes used at Monticello. Dining at Monticello, edited by Damon Lee Fowler and now celebrating its 10th year in print, is also a great resource for anyone interested in trying recipes enjoyed during Jefferson’s time.

Although Jefferson was not the first to introduce foods like ice cream and macaroni to America, he can certainly be credited with popularizing the substance and style to the new nation.

Jefferson was an ever-curious and experimental epicure, gathering and incorporating the best elements of the food traditions he experienced or read about in the Americas and Europe.

The main reading room in the Thomas Jefferson Building at the Library of Congress.

The dining room at Monticello, home to Jefferson’s renowned hospitality and where dinner was served “in good taste and abundance.”

On May 2, descendants of enslaved families planted two trees on Mulberry Row in honor of their ancestors who lived and labored on the mountaintop during Jefferson’s time.

Jefferson's experimentation with Continental fare. Fellow Founding Father Patrick Henry criticized Jefferson for the manner in which “he has abjured his native victuals in favor of French cuisine.”

On wine, there is little disagreement that Jefferson was America’s most knowledgeable connoisseur and our “first distinguished viticulturist.”

Although Jefferson was not the first to introduce foods like ice cream and macaroni to America, he can certainly be credited with popularizing a wide array of ice cream recipes, including one in Jefferson’s own hand for vanilla ice cream.

Not everyone was a fan of Jefferson’s experimentation with Continental fare. Fellow Founding Father Patrick Henry criticized Jefferson for the manner in which “he has abjured his native victuals in favor of French cuisine.”

On wine, there is little disagreement that Jefferson was America’s most knowledgeable connoisseur and our “first distinguished viticulturist.”