



WILLIAMSBURG, February 6, 1772

“ I have just opened *TAVERN* opposite to the Raleigh at the sign of the KING'S ARMS... and shall be much obliged to the Gentlemen who favour me with their company.”

— *JANE VOBE*



Mrs. Jane Vobe's advertisement in the February 6, 1772, issue of the *Virginia Gazette* alerted readers that she had relocated her business to a prime location near the Capitol. Her tavern was reputed to be “where all the best people resorted.” The King's Arms was a common tavern name in England and the colonies. By the 1770s, Parliament was out of favor with some colonists, but most Virginians remained loyal to the king. The tavern's name shifted with the political climate. Known as “Mrs. Vobe's” during the Revolution, it later became the Eagle Tavern.

The King's Arms and other Williamsburg taverns served as local gathering places where customers met to discuss business, politics, news, and gossip over drinks and meals. Taverns were, in this respect, unofficial public buildings. Before and during the Revolution, Williamsburg taverns, including the Raleigh and Wetherburn's, provided rooms for the politicians who debated independence and later operated the provisional government of Virginia. During this period Mrs. Vobe and other tavern keepers supplied food, drink, and lodging to the American troops.

The change of government had little effect on tavern operations. Like its colonial predecessor, the state required tavern keepers to apply for annual licenses and set maximum prices for food, drink, and lodging. The rates had to be posted in each tavern's public room. Artifacts found on the site and sketches of the tavern drawn on late 18th-century insurance policies assisted in the reconstruction of the tavern and the adjoining Purdie House to the east, which contains some of the dining rooms.

Reproduction chairs, tables, and serving pieces represent a deliberate mix of furniture styles popular with the Virginia gentry. The royal coat of arms on the dinnerware was fashionable in the colonies before the Revolution. Other accessories—the pewter candlesticks with glasses, pewter sugar and salt dishes, brass sconces, and maps and framed prints—correspond to items listed in inventories of taverns patronized by affluent customers.

Today's menu items are inspired by 18th-century recipes—with adaptations for 21st-century tastes and methods. Some of the more unusual names come straight from colonial cookery books.





Soupes

Peanut Soupe 9.50

Take clear butter, onions, and shred fine carrots & celery; stew them with your peanuts when they are enough to pass through a sieve and send to take with cream whipped to stand, having pepper and nutmeg beat fine...

(A Kings Arms Tradition)

A Soupe Of Squash 9.50

Having prepared a good broth, take your squash and a bunch of sweet herbs & bring to a boil... when enough add new cream and pass through a sieve

(A Kings Arms original, inspired by: The Cook's & Confectioner's Dictionary, John Nott, 1723)

Starters

Sallet 13

Are commonly made of lettuces of any sort pick'd and wash'd; some candied nuts and pippins as you, please. These are eaten with Spanish vinegar dressing poured over & is very good with cheese

(A Kings Arms original, inspired by:

The Cook's & Confectioner's Dictionary, John Nott, 1723)

To Stew Black Eye Peas 13

Soak your cow pea's & put them in your pot with sweet herbs, a young onion & spring water. When they are enough add tomatoes, roasted squash & hearty greens...put in your dish with pumpkin seeds fry'd & seasoned with pepper beat fine & salt to your taste

(A Kings Arms Original, Ivey Boyd, 2023)

To Butter Shrimp 17

Stew shrimps in a pint of wine with nutmeg... then beat up wine, & butter... serve then on sippets
(The Universal Cook, or Lady's Complete Assistant, John Townsend, 1773)

Westphalia Ham 17

Rub with sugar & let it lie till night... then rub salt peter beat fine a pound of common salt & lie three weeks... dry with wood smoke... Sent to table with cheese, good chutney & bread toasted on the grid iron

(Inspired by: The Lady's Assistant, Charlotte Mason, 1777)

Tavern Dinners

Mrs. Vobe is obliged to offer soupe or sallet & a dessert for a tariff \$17.

All main dishes are served to table with garden offerings dressed in the appropriate manner.

Mrs. Vobe's Tavern Dinner, Prime Rib Of Beef 72

Served with your choice of soupe or salad & a dessert

Beef should be kept for some time before it is dressed... when you have spitted it put it to the fire & baste well while it is roasting & sprinkle with salt... put in a hot dish & garnish with horseradish

King's Cut Tariff \$85

To Broil Cornish Hens 35

Take well fed Cornish Hens & season them with salt & pepper, broil them over a clear fire then laying them next to the fire... shred a shallot, a little thyme, & parsley, put these into strong gravy with lemon

The Cooks & Confectioner's Dictionary, John Nott, 1723

An Onion Pye 30

Pare some potatoes...apples...onions & slice them... make a good crust. Lay in a layer of potatoes, a layer of onions, a layer of apple & layer of eggs until you have filled your pye, strewing seasoning between each layer. Close your pye & bake it an hour & a half

Dr. Lobb's, 1767

To Bake Trout 48

Season your trout with a little black & Jamaica pepper & a good deal of salt... Bake it in a moderate oven... make a sauce with butter, sweet herbs, barberries & a shallot shred fine...

Inspired by: The Experienced English Housekeeper, Elizabeth Raffald, 1769

A Game Pye 52

Take your duck & be sure it is clean of feather, lay it in a pastry case with chibols, mushrooms, & venison...pour in strong gravy with port & claret

A Kings Arms Original, 2023

Beef Steaks 58

The best beef steaks... should not be more than half an inch thick, when you grid iron be hot lay your steaks on it... let it broil till they look brown & turn... Sprinkle with pepper & salt

The London Art of Cookery, John Farley, 1787

To Stew A Choat In The French Way 39

When your pork shanks are brown then place in a stew pan with claret, thyme, marjoram, savory, rosemary peppercorns and mace

Martha Washington Cookbook, origin prior to 1759

These items are cooked to order and may be served raw or undercooked. Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, beef, pork, lamb, seafood, shellfish or eggs increases your risk of food-borne illness, especially if you have certain medical conditions.

All menu items can be prepared gluten-free. Please ask your server.