

26102994D

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 22

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 12, 2026

*Designating April 27, in 2026 and in each succeeding year, as Birthplace of American Cuisine Day in Virginia.*

Patron—Tata (By Request)

Committee Referral Pending

WHEREAS, on April 27, 1607, three ships of the Virginia Company, the *Susan Constant*, *Godspeed*, and *Discovery*, dropped anchor at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, and the first permanent English settlers in the New World came ashore near what is now Cape Henry; and

WHEREAS, after the long transatlantic voyage, the crew and colonists were weary of a monotonous shipboard diet and hungry for fresh ingredients and well-prepared food; and

WHEREAS, George Percy, a future Governor of the Virginia Colony, recorded one of the colonists' earliest interactions with the culinary traditions of the New World, when they encountered a group of Native Americans roasting oysters on a bonfire; and

WHEREAS, the Native Americans fled at the sight of the colonists, leaving behind many of the oysters, which Percy described as ". . . large and delicate in taste" in what is now considered the first written account of prepared food in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the momentous occasion served as the genesis of American cuisine, and while roasted oysters remain a staple of American diets up and down the east coast, they were only the first component in a cultural recipe that has incorporated ingredients and traditions from around the world; and

WHEREAS, the English colonists brought with them wheat, livestock, and European preservation and baking methods, which augmented Native American knowledge of corn, beans, squash, fish, and local foraging, while enslaved Africans incorporated the use of rice, millet, okra, yams, and other crops; and

WHEREAS, as European colonies expanded in the Caribbean, new ingredients, such as sugar, citrus, and spices began to flavor tables on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean; and

WHEREAS, the fusion of these diverse elements, ingredients, and preparations laid the foundation for a unique cuisine defined by shared heritage, resilience, and creativity, further demonstrating the importance of the Commonwealth's role as the cradle of American culture and identity; and

WHEREAS, today, agriculture, aquaculture, and commercial fishing businesses employ tens of thousands of Virginians and produce high-quality products enjoyed across the Commonwealth and around the world; and

WHEREAS, culinary enterprises are major drivers of the Commonwealth's vibrant economy, with restaurants, breweries, distilleries, and wineries generating billions annually in revenue, and culinary tourism drawing visitors from across the nation and supporting hospitality, retail, and heritage sites; and

WHEREAS, Birthplace of American Cuisine Day provides an opportunity to celebrate Virginia as America's first and finest food region, recognize the hardworking Virginians at every level of the food industry, and encourage consumers to "buy local" and take pride in Virginia products; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate April 27, in 2026 and in each succeeding year, as Birthplace of American Cuisine Day in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution to representatives of the Commonwealth's food industry so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates post the designation of this day on the General Assembly's website.