

James Hemings, an enslaved cook

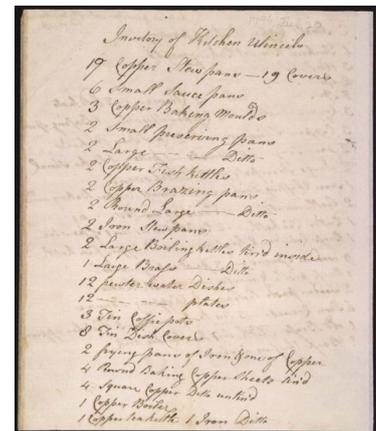
Reading Level: Elementary School

James Hemings was Betty Hemings's son and a slave. When he was nineteen, he crossed the Atlantic Ocean on ship. He traveled with Thomas Jefferson and his daughter Martha. He was going to Paris to be trained as a cook.

Hemings trained with several French caterers and cooks. He even studied with the chef of a prince! He learned to cook 'Snow Eggs' and other fancy desserts. After training for several years, James became Thomas Jefferson's cook. He was paid four dollars a month.

In France, James could have claimed his freedom. But in 1789, he chose to return to Virginia where he was a slave. Jefferson paid James wages, but James wanted to be free. Jefferson told James he had to train another chef before receiving his freedom.

In 1796, James left Monticello with thirty dollars and his free papers. He continued to travel and cook until he died.



Page one of a list of kitchen equipment written out by James Hemings before his departure from Monticello.