

Culinary Historians of Ontario

Autumn 1997

Number 14



The Culinary Historians of Ontario is an information network for foodways research in Ontario. It is an organization for anyone interested in Ontario's historic foods and beverages, from those of the First Nations to recent immigrants. We research, interpret, preserve and celebrate Ontario's culinary heritage.

Medicinal Teaching Garden

The value of native plants in healing has always played an important role in Aboriginal culture. In 1997, the J. Steckle Heritage Homestead in Kitchener sought to recognize the importance of these native plants by requesting a garden be designed to provide their school groups and the public with a greater understanding of Aboriginal healing. A University of Waterloo student Anna Marie Cipriani and professor Dr. Larry Lamb undertook the challenge of designing a *Medicine Wheel Teaching Garden* for the farm.

Before the garden could be designed certain criteria had to be considered. Plant species chosen had to be native to Canada: they had to be able to flourish in dry, sandy soils with full sun: they had to have medicinal properties; and be easily contained. The plot size determined was 7.6 m x 7.6 m and was fixed on the southwest corner of the 10.2 designated heritage property.

The design of the Medicine Wheel originates within the Ojibwa culture and its structure varies slightly from Nation to Nation. The garden is a visual interpretation of human creation and development. In several Aboriginal philosophies, life comes in cycles of four: seasons, colours of people, stages of life, elements of creation, etc.... (A. Hutchen, *Indian Herbalogy of North America*, 1991.) Understanding and respecting the several groupings of the four elements is key to achieving and maintaining balance in the world. (*It must be noted that all design decisions concerning the garden were made respecting the feelings and culture of the Ojibwa people.*)

The majority of plants were purchased through local nurseries; however some were generously donated by interested individuals and community groups. In all, thirty-one plant species were gathered. The following are examples of these plants and their medicinal uses:

Prickly Pear — Roots are used in tea for stomach ailments. Juice of fruit can be applied to warts.

Purple Coneflower — This bitter herb can be used for colic, colds, flu and infection.

Wild Strawberry — Leaf can be used as a nerve tonic, for bladder and kidney ailments and for jaundice and gout.

If members are interested in visiting the Homestead, they should contact Jean Steckle at (519) 748-5719.

*Prepared by Christine Ritsma and Anna Marie Cipriani.
Christine Ritsma, Culinary Historians of Ontario*

Inside this Issue

The Saga of Stinging Nettle Soup
ALHFAM Conference at Dundurn
CHO Changes
Foodways of the Mississaugua
Corn in the Iroquois Community
Culinary Queries
Culinary Calendar

COOKERY COLLECTION

The Saga of Stinging Nettle Soup

Once there was an old, old, old, old witch named Mitzy. Mitzy's favourite food was Cream of Stinging Nettle Soup. One day Mitzy said to herself, "I'm going to open a restaurant and I will make the special Cream of Stinging Nettle Soup." Soon Mitzy had to take all her soup inside for the winter.

At Christmas, Mitzy decorated the soup with Christmas ornaments. In the summer, Mitzy had earned \$444,444 and still people came rushing in.

Soon Mitzy advertised on radio and television. People came from miles around just to eat Cream of Stinging Nettle Soup. Mitzy felt sorry for them to travel so far so she travelled around the world selling Cream of Stinging Nettle Soup. Soon she had \$555,555!

One day Mitzy thought people were getting tired of Cream of Stinging Nettle Soup so Mitzy invented a new type of soup. It was: Soup Nettle Stinging of Cream. It was like Stinging Nettle Soup except it was backward.

Soon Mitzy had \$666,666 and still the customers came. Soon Mitzy had \$789,789. But people got tired of soup. One day Mitzy put a spell on the city she was in, so time stood still. While time was standing still, Mitzy thought about what to do. After five months, Mitzy had an idea. "I know," said Mitzy out loud one day. "I'll make stinging nettle 'sandwiches' and stinging nettle pancakes and stinging nettle pie!" So Mitzy set to work making the recipes.

One day, after Mitzy had broken the spell, she had got many complaints that people were getting tired of having their pets beg for their food. So one day, Mitzy sat down and thought about what to do. Finally she got an idea. "I will make Stinging Nettle Pet Food!" she said to herself.

Soon shop owners were begging her to be able to sell her food. But Mitzy found out that she didn't have enough time to keep making Stinging Nettle Soup and Soup Nettle Stinging of Cream and Stinging Nettle 'Sandwiches' and Stinging Nettle Pie and Stinging Nettle Pet Food. So Mitzy sat down

and thought and thought and thought until finally she got a brilliant idea. All of a sudden out loud she said, "I will make Stinging Nettle Frozen Dinners!"

Soon every supermarket was packed with frozen dinners of stinging nettle. Then one day Mitzy had another idea. She decided to make little packages of snacks that were made out of stinging nettles. She went around to homes for people who didn't have homes and old people's homes and homes for people who couldn't take care of themselves. When Mitzy had got enough money, she went and bought a home in Las Vegas and lived in luxury for the rest of her days.

The author of this story is Kelly Bray and she was eight years old when she wrote this story. One of Kelly's best friends is an 80 year old woman named Mitzi who lives in Sooke, B.C. on Vancouver Island. Mitzi really does make Cream of Stinging Nettle Soup and she loves to folk dance and tramp around in her garden in big black rubber boots.

What is Stinging Nettle?

Stinging Nettle is a bushy single-stalked perennial that has small stinging hairs that cover the stem and underside of the leaves. Nettles are high in vitamin C and traditionally were used in teas and tonics. The young shoots of the plant won't sting and some herb lovers consume them raw in tossed salads. The greens can be cooked like spinach and once boiled, the leaves lose their sting. It is well-known in both Europe and Canada.

The Rural and Native Heritage Cookbook, Volume 1:
"The Gathering", Lovesick Lake Native Women's Association,
 Burleigh Falls, Ontario, 1985. Page 110

Nettle Soup

2 cups	nettle leaves
2 tbsps.	butter
1 tsp.	onion, minced
4 cups	chicken broth
	salt
	sour cream



To pick nettles, wear a pair of gloves and use a pair of shears. Pick enough so that you will have 2 cups of tender top leaves firmly packed. Pour boiling water over nettles to remove the prickles. Drain and chop. Melt butter in saucepan and sauté onion for 1 minute. Add broth, nettles, and salt to taste. Simmer a few minutes. Serve topped with a spoonful of sour cream.

ALHFAM Conference at Dundurn Castle

September 26, 1997

Hamilton

Dundurn Castle proved an inviting location for the recent joint meeting of the regional branch of the Association of Living Historical Farms and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM) and CHO. It was a day of wall to wall historical food, opening with a cook-off challenge between Trevor Hamilton, Chef of Dundurn's Coach House Restaurant, and Dundurn Cook/Demonstrator Cathy Masterson. The recipes were pumpkin puddings, but the competitive techniques used were about 100 years apart.

Fiona Lucas reprised her illustrated review of Ontario's culinary heritage first revealed at last year's CHO conference at Doon. It's an excellent slide presentation that meshes together changes in agricultural and food processing

technology, advancements in in-home cooking and preserving methods, and the influence of immigration on food habits.

After a wonderful and historically authentic lunch from Trevor, we had a whirlwind tour of the Castle, and then headed off for afternoon workshops. I had a chance to delve into one of my personal interests in researching and recreating dishes from heritage recipes; Christine Ritsma and Bridget Wranich hosted a jam-packed session of tips and techniques, polished off by samples of lemonade (including milk and sherry based version) and queen cakes.

Linda Irvine, a researcher at Dundurn, conducted a slide tour of the kitchen garden that was once at

Dundurn, showing the ways and means of plants that would have been grown for the table of Sir Allan McNab and his family

Other sessions included estate brewing, finding or reproducing the ingredients and packaging of heritage foods. We reconvened before departing to sample the two puddings, and I realized that I had eaten my way through yet another CHO event (not that I would ever complain about that aspect). I continue to be impressed with the museum community's collective foodways knowledge, and their willingness to share some simply for the fun in doing so.

Submitted by Lori Jamieson, CHO Member, Freelance Writer/Editor

Foodways of the Mississaugua First Nations in Ontario

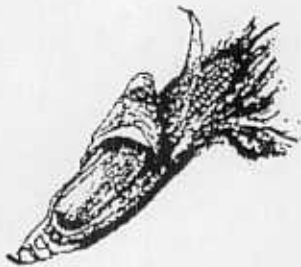
The word Mississaugua comes from the Indian word "Minnezageeg" meaning inhabitants of the land with many mouths of lakes. The Mississaugua tribe are descendants of the Ojibwa and are known as the "Eagle" tribe of the overall Chippewa Nation. The Mississauguas were predominantly a hunting and fishing tribe. These natives occupied various regions of Ontario. Those who lived along the Credit River today exist on the banks of the Grand River near Brantford, Ontario at the New Credit settlement. This land was given to them in the mid 1800s by the chief of the Six Nations.

Food Rules and Customs

The Mississauguas generally ate together around the fire pit. Utensils were not used but homemade dishes, such as wooden or birch bark bowls, were

often available. The Mississauguas were greatly influenced by their neighbours, the Six Nations tribe, who were great hunters and harvesters. Fortunately, the

land in the area was fertile for the growing of corn and specific grains such as oats, wheat and barley. Also, wild rice was frequently consumed because it was abundant along the western shores of Lake Ontario. Some vegetables were grown and each family had their own specific gardening and maple sugar bush area.



Gender Roles

The men of the Mississaugua tribe were the voyagers and hunters who were expected to protect and provide for their families. The women were known as the "gatherers" and did a considerable amount of work. Some of their duties were the gutting and skinning of the animals, harvesting of the grains and planning for the winter months.

Preservation methods were also the responsibility of the women. Young children helped the women prepare and preserve the food.

Hunting

The hunters of the Mississaugua were very wise and learned a lot of their techniques from the Six Nations. Hunting was carried out in the evening with the use of torches on the end of their canoes. The light would attract animals on the bank as well as fish and various birds. During the day canoes were camouflaged in order to creep up closer to wild birds. The main hunting weapons used were the bow and arrow and the spear. The arrows were constructed from small, soft stones which were chipped and formed with the use of larger, harder rocks. The snare trap was used in order to catch smaller animals like the squirrel and the rabbit. The Mississauguas, being located near the lakes and rivers, were talented in their fishing techniques and were very patient. During winter months ice

fishing was practised by chopping a hole in the ice and waiting until a baited fish could be speared. Different animals were hunted at different seasons. Deer, for example, were more prominent in the spring and summer, while the



rabbit was in the winter. After a successful hunt a feast was held to celebrate. These natives did not consume three meals regularly, but rather ate when the food was available. Usually, at feasts and celebrations the natives consumed huge amounts of food in order to nourish their hunger. Some of the more common feasts had names resembling the main item being consumed, for example, the "deer feast".

Present Practices

Today the Mississauga tribe has adopted a more modern lifestyle. However, on special occasions some families still indulge in a few customary foods such as corn soup and wild rice tarts. Also, an annual Pow Wow is held in the late summer. This is a celebration where the customs, foods and clothing of the Mississauga culture are displayed for the public as a reminder of one part of Ontario's heritage.

The preceding was based on the following works:

"Notes on the History, Customs and beliefs of the Mississauga Indians", *Journal of American Folklore*, A.F. Chamberlain, 1888.

Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians.
Donald B. Smith, 1987.

Recipes

All three ladies reside near Ohsweken, Ontario on the Six Nations reserve.

Corn Soup

R. Stiers, Ohsweken, Ontario

Boil 6 cups of water and add 1 package of pork hocks or salted pork.

Bake frozen corn until dried (almost burned).

Allow hocks to cook for 15 minutes and remove.

Add dried corn and 2 cans of white corn.

Pick meat off hocks and put back into pot.

Let mixture simmer 2-3 hours.

Add more water if corn absorbs too much of the broth.

Add salt and pepper to taste.

Serve with fresh bread.

Wild Rice Tarts

P. Martin, Ohsweken, Ontario

Cook two cups wild rice by boiling or steaming

In a frying pan with butter soften chopped onions, carrots, celery and some chopped walnuts

Combine mixture with cooked rice and mix

Spoon this into tart shells and bake in oven until pastry has browned

Indian Chutney Sauce

P. Martin, Ohsweken, Ontario

6 green tomatoes

6 ripe tomatoes

1 cup chopped celery

6 onions

2 cups seedless raisins

1 green pepper

12 apples

1 hot red pepper

Chop the above finely and boil in 1 quart vinegar, with 2 tsps salt, 2 cups brown sugar, 1/2 cup pickling spice (in a cheese cloth). Cook until thick.

Written by Chris Herkimer, Bachelor of Commerce, University of Guelph

CHANGES ... CHANGES ... CHANGES

CHO members need to be made aware of some changes in the editorial team (no we haven't broken up.....we're not like the Beatles.) On October 1, **Bridget Wranich** moved to a newly purchased house.

Her new address is:

431 Main St.

East York, Ontario

M4C 4Y1 Phone number: unchanged

Christine Lupton (now **Ritsma**), was married in July and moved to Stratford. Coincidentally, it is just a few doors down from two CHO members, the Stratford Chefs School and Chez Soleil Cooking School. (Hey guys, how about a welcome wagon sometime!)

Her new address and telephone number are:

207 Albert Street,

Stratford, Ontario.

N5A 3K7 Phone number: (519) 272-1949

CORN IN THE IROQUOIS COMMUNITY

An interview with **Bertha Skye**

"Corn is one of the foods that was given to us by the creator and it sustains our bodies," said Bertha Skye, Aboriginal chef and educator from the Six Nations Reserve in Brantford, Ontario. According to Bertha, corn was the most important food to the Iroquois in the past and they still use it today. "If we have corn in our house we will never go hungry; it is one of our staple foods."

In the Iroquois culture, the "Three Sisters" are corn, beans and squash, and eaten together are able to completely nourish the human body. The three vegetables are planted in the same hill. "As they grow," says Bertha, "they nurture each other and that is why they are called the Three Sisters."

A four-day Green Corn Harvest ceremony is held every summer in the Iroquois Long House as soon as the corn and other vegetables begin to ripen. When the "green" corn (sweet corn rather than field-dried corn) is ready, the elders in the community announce that it is time for the ceremony. On the first day, families arrive in the morning with baskets of food to be shared: Indian cookies, pan bread (bannock baked in a pan), donuts, fry bread (deep-fried bannock), a cake or a pie. Tobacco is burned, an Iroquois tradition, and thanks is given to the creator for a good crop. The

foods contributed by the families are then passed around by the elders so they can be shared and eaten. For the next three days the ceremony is repeated, each day thanking the creator for a different vegetable. Corn is always one, as are beans and squash.

Bertha grows sweet corn in her garden each year, but it is not enough for her family so she buys corn to supplement her supply. In addition to eating corn-on-the-cob in the summer she prepares dried corn for winter use. She says that "when corn is in season and you can't eat it all off the cob, cut the kernels from the cob and dry it." To do this, the sweet corn kernels are put single-layer onto a cookie sheet and placed in a 250 F (120 C) oven until they are completely dry. Bertha begins the drying process one day, turns off the oven at night and continues the next day. "If they are the least bit damp they will become mouldy in the winter." When they are cool, Bertha stores them in gallon jars -- "about two jars are sufficient for our use."

When winter comes, the corn is ready to make into hearty and nourishing soups. The soup is easily made: "Just take pork, venison or whatever kind of meat you have, add dried corn and red kidney beans and water, and boil for about three

hours." Bertha said that she uses about one cup of dried corn and half that amount of dried beans to make a large pot of soup. Often she prepares homemade dumplings for a complete meal. She adds flour to bannock dough which is made of flour, milk or buttermilk, baking powder and salt. When the dough is stiff enough, she rolls it out into a thin sheet, about 1/4 inch thick, and cuts it into triangle shapes. She drops these dumplings into the soup as it is finishing cooking and continues boiling it until the dumplings are cooked through. She says that this is the traditional way for the Iroquois people to make corn soup and many continue to make corn soup from dried corn.

"There are so many ways that we use corn -- we were eating cornbread and corn soup in the past and we are still eating them today."

Bertha is now retired from the Woodlawn Cultural Centre and works as a food consultant. She especially enjoys teaching young people about native cuisine. Frequently she is called upon to prepare traditional native feasts for special government events.

*Written by Jo Marie Powers,
Associate Professor at the
University of Guelph*

Culinary Queries

Colleen Leo is our Culinary Queries columnist. Please send queries to her via Christine Ritsma's address on the back page.

"Forcemeat" is an old term for stuffing or sausage meat. The origin of the word is the Latin *farcire*, "to stuff" which, via Old French *farser*, was adopted into English as *farce*, as in "Broach thy pig [put it on a spit]; then farce him," (15th century). To the variant form "force", "meat" was added in the (late 16th century) to form "forcemeat".

Forcemeat, confusingly, can have two meanings:

- (1) the minced or chopped meat which is used in a stuffing, or
- (2) a mixture which usually contains minced meat and some form of bread.

Thus, forcemeat (meaning #1) is generally combined with a panada/panade, (breadcrumbs boiled to a bland pulp), which is generally boiled in water, milk or stock, and when cold added to bind a stuffing. This mixture is also called forcemeat (meaning #2) It is commonly 2 parts panada to 1 part forcemeat. (Fitzgibbon).

Stuffing a Beef

"One onion, two shallots minced very small, a little white pepper, two or three cloves pounded and anchovy minced small, a little dried thyme, rubbed down, a small quantity of parsley minced, a few bread crumbs, finely grated, mix all these ingredients with a raw egg, [pound finely in a mortar], stuff it well in the part where the bones came out etc."

A more recent forcemeat recipe has "ham and chicken or veal minced together, then pounded in a mortar [or processed] with onion, salt, pepper, lemon peel, breadcrumbs, and chopped parsley. The mixture is bound with an egg to which milk is added, if necessary"(Fitzgibbon).

To Stuff a Turkey

Grate a wheat loaf, one quarter of a pound of butter, one quarter of a pound of salt pork, finely chopped, two eggs, a little sweet majoram, summer savory, parsley, pepper, and salt if the port be not sufficient, fill the bird and sew up. The same will answer for all wild fowls.

What is Forcemeat?

According to *Larousse Gastronomique*, there are 5 basic forcemeats:

- (1) pork forcemeat,
- (2) veal and fat forcemeat ("godiveau"),
- (3) gratiforcemeat (liver puree),
- (4) fine forcemeat with cream,
- (5) forcemeat made of special ingredients (meatless or with meat).

Innumerable forcemeats derive from the basic five. To give you some indication of the variety of foods considered forcemeat, here are a few examples: pate, turkey stuffing, savoury tart filling, ravioli filling, and devilled egg filling.

The following is a nineteenth century recipe for a meatless forcemeat (*Modern Practical Cookery*, Nourse, 1845):

References:

John Ayto, *The Glutton's Glossary—a dictionary of food and drink terms*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).
Theodora Fitzgibbon, *The Food of the Western World - an encyclopedia of food from North America and Europe*, New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1976.

P. Montagne, *Larousse Gastronomique*, London: Hamlyn, 1961.

Waterfowls require onions. The same ingredients stuff a leg of veal, fresh pork, or loin of veal.

The Cook Not Mad (Kingston, Upper Canada, 1831).

Culinary Calendar

Please send CHO information about your upcoming food history or related events. We are pleased to include them in the newsletter.

November

Christmas and Hogmany Treats

The Gibson House Museum (416) 395-7432

5172 Yonge St. at Park Home Avenue, North York

Saturday November 1, Tuesday November 4,

or Saturday November 15 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 pm

Enjoy this hearth cooking workshop and create some delicious Scottish holiday foods.. Cost: \$20.00. Pre-registration required.

Seasonal Preparations

Heritage Toronto, Colborne Lodge (416) 392-6916

Colborne Lodge Drive, Toronto (South end of High Park)

Weekends in November 12:00 - 5:00 pm

Learn about the history and preparation of two Christmas favourites - fruitcake and mincemeat.

Mincemeat, Pomanders & Paper Chains

The Gibson House Museum (416) 395-7432

November 29 & 30 12:00 - 5:00 pm

Discover the traditions of 19th century rural Christmas.

December

Starry Night

Doon Heritage Crossroads (519) 748-1914

Homer Watson Blvd., Kitchener

December 22 6:30 - 9:30 pm

Enjoy the sights, sounds and flavours of Christmas Past as you see the village in its finest lamp-lit beauty. Music, food and good cheer under the silent stars.

Cost: \$15.00 Adults, \$7.50 Children (12 years) GST included. Pre-registration required.

The Stroke of Midnight

The Gibson House Museum (416) 395-7432

December 27 & 28 8:00 - 10:30 p.m.

Two special evenings of Hogmany celebrations, wonderful foods, and a visit from the first-footer.

Hogmany

The Gibson House Museum (519) 395-7432

December 28 12:00 - 5:00 pm

Celebrate the Scottish New Year with an afternoon of song and ceremony.

Traditions of Hogmany

The Gibson House Museum (519) 395-7432

December 29 to 31 12:00 - 5:00 pm

Enjoy the food and customs of a Scottish New Year.

Gaslight Tours

Heritage Toronto, Spadina Museum & Mackenzie House

(416) 392-6916 or (416) 392-6915

Spadina Museum - 285 Spadina Rd. **Mackenzie House** - 82 Bond St.

Come and enjoy live musicians playing period music. Taste traditional treats indicative of both time periods. Each home features their own selection of edible delights.

Mackenzie House December 19 - 21 Cost: \$12.00

Spadina Museum December 18 - 21 Cost: \$15.00

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Visit both for \$20.00. Pre-registration required.

Historical Cooking Classes in 1998

Heritage Toronto (416) 392-6910

You are invited to join cooks experienced in the ways of 19th century cookery. Cost: \$40.00 + GST The programs are:

Introduction of Hearth Cookery

Fort York

February 1 or April 5 2:00 - 5:00 pm

Pancakes, Crepes & Bockings

Colborne Lodge

February 8 or April 18 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Scottish National Dishes from Mistress Dods

Mackenzie House

February 15 or April 18 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Afternoon Tea: History, Etiquette & Receipts

Spadina Museum

February 21 or April 25 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Culinary Credits

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Thanks for this issue to Kelly Bray, Anna Marie Cipriani, Chris Herkimer, Lori Jamieson, Colleen Leo, Jo Marie Powers, Bertha Skye & Charlene Wranich

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