The Culinary Historians Of Ontario



Winter 2001 Number 27

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.

CHO ~ Getting Together in 2001

Mark your calendars for these fascinating new CHO sessions.

Explore Canadian Cookery Books

with Elizabeth Driver

Author of the soon to be published Bibliography of Canadian Cookbooks (1825–1950)



Gibson House Museum - Lower Gallery -5172 Yonge Street at the North York Centre Subway - 12 to 4 p.m. **Cost: \$5.00**

Elizabeth will share her extensive research on cookbooks used in Canadian households in the 19th and 20th centuries. Bring along your favourite pre-1950 Canadian cookbook, and a dish prepared from one of its recipes for a potluck lunch. Elizabeth may be able to tell you something you didn't know about your book. (Facilities to heat dishes will be limited, so consider a cold dish.) More details about the potluck when you call/e-mail to register.

CHO's First Movie Night

Featuring Babette's Feast and a documentary about Ukrainian ritual Easter breads.

March 30th

Social Hour from 6:30 p.m. and the documentary film begins at 6:40 p.m. **Cost: \$5.00**

Northern District Library

43 Orchard View Blvd. - west off Yonge Street, one block north of Eglinton.

A chance to get together with your culinary friends and experience two wonderful movies about our favourite topic - food! We will start the evening at the Northern District Library to view the movies. Then we will adjourn to Mary Williamson's home for an evening of 1960s cocktail nibbles (time to get out those cookbooks again!) and "virgin" cocktails.

Babette's Feast tells the story of a Parisian chef in exile who prepares a glorious feast for the inhabitants of a Danish village. The movie is visually sumptuous and lovingly details the preparations for the feast – the perfect foodie's movie, and it won an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film.

- To Register for the Cookbook or Film
- events: Call Elizabeth Nelson Raffaele at
- (416) 406-0146
- or e-mail:
- elizabeth.nelson@sympatico.ca

CHO Road Trip

Sunday, June 3rd
An Expedition to the Country



We will be visiting Pat Crocker's home in an 1857 church (1 ½ hours north of Kitchener) for a picnic in the country. Watch for details.

What's Inside:

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Cookery Collection

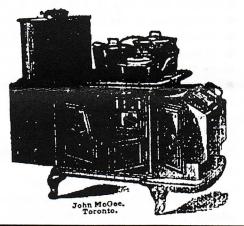
Here are two of the recipes enjoyed by the Macleod Clan participants that I adapted from several traditional Scottish recipes. – Thelma Barer-Stein

SCOTTISH BEER CAKE

Preheat oven to 350'F. Butter one large loaf pan $(9" \times 4")$ or butter two smaller ones $(3" \times 7")$.

1	cup	soft butter	250	mL
2	tsp	baking powder	10	mL
13/4	cup	brown sugar	425	mL
1	tsp	baking soda	5	mL
4		eggs	4	
3/4	cup	beer	175	mL
3	cups	all-purpose flour	r750	mL
2	cups	chopped nuts	500	mL

In a large bowl cream butter and sugar until very light and fluffy, about ten minutes. Beat in eggs, one at a time. Sift flour with baking powder and baking soda and add the flour mixture alternately with the beer, to the well-beaten eggs, butter and sugar. Spoon the mixture into the loaf pan(s), sprinkle a few nuts on top and bake at 350', centre of the oven for one hour for large or small loaf pans.



PARKIN BISCUITS

Preheat oven to 350'F. Brush two baking sheets with soft butter. (Note the unusual mixing method.)

1	cup	all purpose flour	250	mL
1/2	tsp	ground ginger	2	mL
1/2	cup	white granulated	125	mL
		sugar		
1/2	tsp	cinnamon	2	mL
1/2	cup	rolled oats	125	mL
1/2	cup	corn syrup	125	mL
1	tsp	baking soda	5	mL
2		beaten eggs	2	
1/4	cup	chilled butter	50	mL
		in small cubes		

Almond halves or slices for decorating

In a large mixing bowl combine all dry ingredients and spices by rubbing together with the chilled butter bits until the mixture looks like coarse flakes. Meanwhile, warm the syrup briefly (10-15 seconds in the microwave), stir the beaten eggs into the warmed syrup with a fork then pour the mixture over the flour mixture, stirring with the fork until a soft sticky dough is formed.

Roll small (1 ") balls between your fingers and place them two inches apart on the buttered baking sheets. Press the almond decoration into the top of each. Bake in the centre of the oven for 10 minutes until lightly browned and firm. (Don't over bake) Slide baked cookies on to a rack to cool. These remain moist and chewy and they freeze well in an airtight tin.

Upcoming Issues:

SPRING - (APRIL): Spring Fruits - Please send us your favourite recipes for rhubarb or stories from the rhubard patch!

SUMMER - (JULY): Focusing on the 170th anniversary of the publication of *The Cook Not Mad, Canada's first published cookbook.*

FIONA'S MUSINGS

Note to CHO members: With the exception of this Musings column, I am taking a leave of absence from an organizing role within CHO for the next while. You can contact me to give feedback at lucasf@sympatico.ca.

ecently, some colleagues and I were trying to write a few paragraphs about the importance of historic foodways in museums/living history sites. We found it surprisingly difficult because we are already convinced of its self-evidence. However, for a readership with no such opinion we couldn't easily was found it so. All the obvious

verbalize why we found it so. All the obvious an expression of culture, etc. – but where was the their money through the museum door,

viscerally visitors respond to activity it all the time. But anecdotes are not labour intensive and expensive, boards with severe monetary and

And, culinary history has not academic acceptance, although general conversation, "I am a response is, "I didn't know there for every time I've heard that....) To "Oh yes, there are quite a few of us." I Masters in Canadian History. Not only did History Department because my ancient BA justify culinary history as a legitimate area of academics have a hard time recognizing food as bottom-line number crunchers do too.

things occurred to us – food is popular, is universal, is bottom-line proof that these ideas bring visitors and especially on repeat visits? We know how and tastes in an historic kitchen because we see sufficient proof. Foodways is

sufficient proof. Foodways is awkward to justify to museum staffing restrictions.

yet achieved the patina of we're getting there. If I say in a food historian", the most common was such a thing." (If I had a dime which I invariably say, with a grin, recently returned to U of T to pursue a

I have to make a case for acceptance into the was in the History of Fine Art, but I had to historical study. To fellow historians! So, if some an historical topic, then it's hardly surprising that

General popular acceptance seems to be getting quite good though. Some food magazines routinely include history – the excellent but defunct *President's Choice Magazine* and *Bon Appetit* come instantly to mind. Food packaging, especially from family firms, increasingly feature their history. Robin Hood Flours is sponsoring a programme about preserving family recipes (see www.robinhood.com). The Food Channels, both Canadian and American, slip it into programming. Publishers are much more adventurous with culinary history topics now. And, happily, visitors always affirm our conviction that what is we are doing is fundamentally interesting and worthwhile.

To paraphrase the late Sophie Coe, an American historian who specialized in South American foodways, a country's culinary history is as important a study as its philosophy, its politics and its geography. Food is who we are. That's why it should be included in museum programming and academia.

A Culinary Query from Amy Scott:

Jac

There is an advertisement that shows up in an 1860 issue of William Lyon Mackenzie's Toronto Weekly Message, for books available for purchase through Mackenzie from a bookseller in New York. Two of the books are food related, but I am not familiar with them. Perhaps our readers might have some information? They are: Breakfast, Dinner and Tea – Viewed Classically, Poetically and Practically and Soyer's Modern Domestic Cookery. The first one had no author listed, but sounded quite interesting! I've seen quite a few titles by Alexis Soyer, but not this specific one. I wonder if this is an edition under a changed title (maybe The Modern Honsewife or Menagere) or an unauthorized reprint. Can anyone offer assistance?

A Meeting with the Clan Macleod North American Gathering

Thelma Barer-Stein, Ph.D.

Thelma Barer-Stein is president of Culture Concepts Inc. www.cultureconcepts.ca, and the author of You Eat What You Are: People, Culture and Food Traditions, published in 1999 by Firefly Books, which this year received the Cuisine Canada's Gold Award in the category of Food and Beverage Books.

Early this past year, I was invited to speak to the Clan Macleod North American Gathering to be held at The University of Guelph in August. It had been suggested that a workshop focusing on Scottish Foods "would add variety and uniqueness" to their usual program of Scottish history, music and dance.

Although I agreed, I really had no idea what I was in for.

I began pulling ideas together by spending several days browsing books on Scottish foods at the Toronto Reference Library, sources recommended chasing Christine Ritsma and Elizabeth Nelson-Raffaele at Gibson House - and many others. I dug out recipes from sources as varied as the Time-Life (Cooking of the British Isles) Series (1969), to The Cook and Housewife's Manual (1833), and to the spattered, wrinkled and brown handwritten recipes (from the early 1920's) of two elderly Scottish lady friends. (In the late 1800's their mothers had hastily written these before departing Scotland to make a new life in the little-known wilderness of Canada.)

Surrounded with notes and photocopied sheets, I found it difficult to know where or how to begin pulling together a presentation to a group of people I was certain knew much more than I did. Perhaps that was the cue. I decided to do a rough outline, I would throw out suggestions of interesting foods and dishes and let them decide which to focus on, and hope that despite my research,

they would have even better stories to share.

To put myself in the "Scottish mood," I sorted lovingly through old recipes, conjuring up memories of the sights and sounds of old streets in Edinburgh, the modern busyness of Glasgow and the icy biting winds of St Andrews. And as I cooked and baked, I happily inhaled the soft warm aromas of buttery shortbreads, lightly spiced Scottish Beer Cake, lemony Seedy Cake and cinnamon-scented Parkin Biscuits. I had to smile as I thought how really ludicrous it was for me to bring Scottish baking to the Macleods! But I was also smiling because surely the gathering of the Macleod Clan would be swinging with kilts, wailing with bagpipes and I would happily strain again to filter the meaning from the lilting Scottish brogue and regional accents. What fun!

I was told there would likely be about 20 to 30 participants, but ever being the optimist, I prepared three plates of bakery and 50 six-page handouts. (Well, there was so much I wanted them to have!)

The great day arrived. I invited a friend to accompany me to Guelph - after all, she was a Macleod and I figured she would help to bolster my flagging assurance and I even briefed her on the presentation outline and when to applaud and when to laugh loudly. Faithful friends do those things. But upon arrival and being greeted by yet another Macleod, we were told with some hesitation that they had been sorely disappointed this year, as few participants had turned out for the workshops in the previous two days. With a thumping, sinking heart I managed to ask, "How many attended?" "Oh," she replied hesitantly," only about 10 or 15." Resolutely we plodded onward to the classroom, filled with rows and rows of chairs (which I now knew would not be filled) and waited hopefully for the participants to trickle in. We ended up with a packed room of more than 70 shiny expectant faces!

I didn't need to ask their names, because I knew they were all Macleods or related to Macleods. What I didn't know until they spoke – actually interjected, jumped up to speak, waved hands for attention, and disputed each other's opinions the recollections-was that most of audience came from the United States and proved it by their Brooklyn, Louisiana, Georgia, New York and Chicago accents. I strained to listen carefully, but to my great disappointment, their Scottish accents had disappeared. However, there were many kilts.

My plan was to get everyone in the "Scottish food mood" by passing the plates of my attempts at Scottish bakery, then launching into stories of the classic foods, and ending with some evocative words about Scotch Whisky. In between, I would touch on points such as, "What's the difference between pies and bridies? What is whim-wham? Is there more than one story about the origin of Scottish marmalade and what do we know about the mystical haggis?"

We started with a look at the glossary of Foods and Food Terms from my book, You Eat What You Are, to identify how many food preparations contained oats. The participants were quick with answers. The qualities and uses of oats in "fine, medium and whole" seemed endless: Black Pudding, Brose, Atholl Brose, Caboc, Car Cakes, Forfar Bridies, Haggis, Hotchpotch and other soups, often thickened with oatmeal, Mealie Pudding, and of course, Scotch Oatmeal Porridge. Then, glossary in hand, a tall, kilted gentleman approached me to gently explain that I had made an error in my glossary'. He read from his handout: "Nettles was another name for thistles."

"Oh," he said, "if you mistook a nettle for a thistle you'd be sorely covered with stinging hairs!"

Discussing the incomparable Scottish Dundee Marmalade brought a flurry of stories. One woman stood quickly to assert that there was only one true story: "Mary, Queen of Scots was feeling unwell, and so her chef tried to cheer her by creating a jam of oranges to remind her of the warmth and sweetness of France where she had been so happy, and that the name was based on his despairing concern for his Oueen, "Madame est malade!" Having stated this, she sat down with a look of triumphal satisfaction. I smiled kindly and said, "Yes, but there at least two other stories about the origin! One, from Clarissa Dickson Wright (1999) that the "Ottoman Turks had been producing the orange jam called Marmelo for years; and the other story more widely accepted (Theodora Fitzgibbon, 1970) was that a Spanish ship loaded with a cargo of Seville oranges took refuge from a storm in Dundee Harbour. The enterprising James Keiller, purchased the cargo cheaply, only to realize later that no one wanted to buy the bitter oranges with the ugly thick skin. It was his thrifty and ingenious wife, Janet, who made the oranges into a conserve, "little realizing that it would achieve world fame and that her descendents would still be making it today."

Everyone groaned when I brought up the topic of haggis. Of course, they all knew the mysterious ingredients lovingly chopped, seasoned and pressed into the paunch of a sheep and then boiled for hours was Haggis. But did they know where the name came from? Did they know how to boil a Haggis without having it burst and spew the contents over the kitchen?

Eyebrows were raised. I continued. We had earlier discussed the many foods derived from Scotland's historic early

connection with France, and that the name for haggis was apparently derived from the French word "hachis" meaning "to chop". Even more interesting was Meg Dods' (1833) description of one Dr. Redgill's experiments with boiling stuffed meats. He wrote in his journal, "as a canon of cookery...all stuffed meats... are not to be boiled by their apparent size, but by their solidity... the sewing should be the stitch surgeons use in sewing up wounds," and as a final caution, he noted that "If the cook would avoid the catastrophe of her pig, goose or haggis bursting, she will boil these important articles on a fish strainer, that if an accident do occur, ready help may be administered." There now, you can prepare your haggis without concern!

Several in the audience mumbled about wonderful Scottish bakeries happily supplying boiled haggis, ready to reheat. old family "secret" Others offered ingredients.

Among other interesting bits that research turns up, was the entry I found about the Scots in Canada in the recently published encyclopedia The Peoples of Canada (1999). Noting that the Scots in Canada "distinctive any have did not characteristics", there was a possibility that Scottish attitudes towards alcohol nonetheless "shaped Canadian drinking patterns." The authors claim that by permitting the public drinking of alcohol, "insisted that further surroundings be made as unpleasant as possible". Together, the audience and I wondered if Scottish attitudes, so-called, were really to blame for the dark, dank and smelly beer parlors of yesteryear with their separate entrances for gentlemen and ladies?

The presentation went overtime, with everyone chattering and sharing recipes and stories, and I found myself musing on what makes a presentation fun and exhilarating? And as they filed out the door with thanks and handshakes, I thought to myself, "The answer is when you are lucky enough to have an audience that gives you back as much as you gave them. I knew that this had not been a "presentation"; it had been a dialogue.

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FAMILY FARE by Ed Lyons

As I mentioned in the autumn newsletter, this is a column for our readers to share old family recipes, These recipes should have been used in families for 2 or more generations. We would also like some of the history attached to the recipes and your families.

I wrote that I would cover 'schmaltz' in this issue. 'Schmalz' is German for dripping and 'schmaltz' is the North American Yiddish spelling. It is a standard ingredient in German and eastern European peasant cookery. Schmaltz is one of the prime ingredients in Jewish chopped liver and matzoh balls.

My paternal grandfather fled to England to escape the pogroms in the Ukraine in the mid 1800's. Eventually, he ended up in Hamilton, Ontario, via the U.S. in 1899. I was introduced to schmaltz as a young child in the 1930's when I visited my Grandfather's home.

As the pampered only child of the youngest sibling, I loved to sit in the kitchen while my Aunts Anna and Etta cooked. Like many households in that period, Aunt Anna was responsible for the kitchen and Aunt Etta ruled the rest of the house because my Grandmother had died before I was born.

Here is my family recipe:

Schmaltz

10 - 16 oz chicken, duck or goose fat 1 medium potato 1 medium onion water to cover

Quarter the potato and onion, place fat, potato and onion in a saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a rolling boil then reduce to a slow boil. The schmaltz is done when the water has evaporated and the potato and onion are nicely browned. Remove the potato, onion and any bits remaining of un-rendered fat. Pore the fat into a sterilized glass container.

The potato and onion are really good to eat hot. The schmaltz will keep in the fridge for months without going bad. If you leave it too long, some mould may begin to grow on the top, but you can remove this without any problem and the fat will still be good.

This is a very light fat and is better than butter for pan-frying things like new potatoes and fish. You need to use very little fat and it doesn't burn as easily as butter.

If I'm not swamped with your recipes, for future columns I'll provide my family's recipes for chopped liver, potato pancakes (latkes), matzoh balls, etc. I can also include some from my wife's family. Margaret grew up on a farm in BC and has recipes for Japanese—style food from the depression era.

But please, get those family recipes in to me along with some historical notes.

Ed Lyons

E-mail: lyons@idirect.com

Fax: 416-883-9100 PAUSE PAUSE 1140

Snail mail:

P.O. Box 431, Station F Toronto, ON M4Y 2L8

E-mail is best. Wordperfect or Word format please. You may also fax me. Failing those alternatives, typed or legible manuscripts will be accepted.

Ed spends part of his retirement time volunteering as an historic cook at Spadina Museum in Toronto

Culinary Calendar

Please send CHO information about your upcoming food history or related events.

We are pleased to include them in the newsletter.

FEBRUARY

Our Growing Heritage – Illustrated Garden Lectures

Spadina Historic House and Gardens (416) 392-6910

February 4, 11, 18 & 25 1 - 2:30 pm

This year's theme is Wildflowers, Naturalization and the Environment. Lecture and questions period followed by refreshments. Pre-registration required. Cost \$15 + GST per lecture.

Spice Route

Chez Soleil, (519) 271-7404 120 Brunswick St. Stratford, ON

February 6 - 27 (Tuesdays) 7 - 10 pm

Follow 24 spices and their historical journeys as well learn tips on buying, roasting, grinding and storage. Learn how to mix and form spice rubs, marinades, spiced oils and vinegars. Pre-registration required. Class size 6. Cost \$145.

Kitchen Design

Chez Soleil (519) 271-7404

February 8- March 1 (Thursdays)

7 - 10 pm

Learn how to space plan and become familiar with material specifications, work with existing cupboards and appliances or create a whole new look. Preregistration required. Cost \$145.

Valentine Cookie Celebration

Colborne Lodge in High Park

(416) 392-6916

February 10 & 11 12 - 4 pm

Enjoy decorating gingerbread Valentine hearts with icings, currants, comfits, coloured sugar and cut-out pictures.

Adults \$5, Seniors \$4, Children \$ 3.50

St. Valentine's Day Tea

Montgomery's Inn (416) 394-8113

February 14 1 - 4:30 pm

Celebrate with a special menu in honour of Saint Valentine. Adults \$4, Children \$ 3

MARCH

Irish Country Cooking

Chez Soleil (519) 271-7404

March 6-27 (Tuesdays) 7-10 pm

"It's more than tripe and soda bread." Inspired by the Ballymaloe Cooking School this course reflects good food mixed with cultural history. Pre-registration required. Cost \$145.

MARCH continued...

La Belle Province

Chez Soleil (519) 271-7404

March 8-29 (Thursdays) 7-10 pm

Habitant cookery is representative of the early French Canadian experience with echoes of Norman French cooking. Pre-registration required. Cost \$ 145.

APRIL

East Indian Vegetarian Cookery

Chez Soleil (519) 271-7404

April 3 - 24 (Tuesdays) 7 - 10 pm

When vegetables are your only source of nutrients, it's natural to try different approaches to cooking. Chinese herbalism, Ayurvedic medicine included in this class. Preregistration required. Cost \$145.

A Fork In the Road

Chez Soleil (519) 271-7404

April 5 - 26 (Thursdays) 7 - 10 pm

Anik See has written a delightful book on food and travelling. Recipes included are from Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore.

Pre-registration required. Cost \$ 145.

Culinary Credits

Co Founders:

Fiona Lucas (416) 534-1405

Christine Ritsma (519) 272-1949

Bridget Wranich (416) 690-7062

Newsletter Committee

Amy Scott, Ed Lyons, Carrie Herzog, Melanie Garrison, Bridget Wranich

Thanks for this issue to Thelma Barer-Stein

Our address is:

to reprint articles.

c/o C. Ritsma

207 Albert Street

Stratford, Ontario, Canada

N5A 3K7

E-mail:

lucasf@sympatico.ca

critsma@orc.ca

malagonto@look.ca

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