

Culinary Chronicles

Newsletter of the Culinary Historians of Canada

Quebec's Historic Foodways

Poutine and Beyond: Some Food Words of Quebec

Gary Draper

Gary has been a university professor, a librarian, a book reviewer, and an editor. In his retirement he continues to enjoy reading, eating and reading about eating.

When the French-speaking visitors to North America – and, later, settlers – began to name their foods, they, like colonizers everywhere, inevitably spoke of foods they were familiar with, and foods they weren't. As a result, again inevitably, the vocabulary of Quebecois cuisine is in part shared with French speakers everywhere, and in part highly localized.

Among the native foods consumed, the Europeans of New France ate squash and pumpkin and corn and beans, moose and bear, goose and pigeon. And how did they speak of these foods? Corn they called *le maïs* (Spanish *maíz*, Arawak *mahís*), but they used it primarily for fodder – and popcorn. Beans, of course, they were familiar with from the old world. The French word is *haricots* (derived from the Old French verb *harigoter*, to cut in pieces). The French for squash is *courge*, abbreviated from the Latin *cucurbita*. In the 19th century, this word wandered (or drifted) into English to mean a gourd-shaped basket, towed behind a fishing-boat, for holding live bait. One of the most popular kinds of *cucurbita* is what we call pumpkin, and which in Quebec was, and perhaps in places still is, known as *la citrouelle*

iroquoise (Iroquois pumpkin). *Citrouelle* derives from the medieval Latin *citrullus*, from which English derives the branch of the squash family that we call citron.

L'original is the French word for the animal that in English is called the moose. I haven't been able to track the etymology of this word beyond that it comes from a Basque word, *orignac*, which came into Canadian French in that form, and evolved into *original*. For years I misread this word as "original" and made many not-very-amusing jokes about the moose being the original animal of Canada. I'd like to take this opportunity to apologize to everyone to whom I ever made this joke, and to promise never to do it again. The French word for bear, *l'ours*, comes directly and without much change from the Latin *ursus*. Our modern English word, by the way, comes from the Old English *bera*. Of course many English words with Latin roots entered the language via French, in the wake of the Norman conquest. Such is the case with the game bird with the Latin name of *perdix*. In Quebec, it is called *la perdrix*. The Anglo-Norman and Old French is *perdriz*, or *pertriz*.

Mad for Marmalade

The 4th annual **MAD** event at Fort York continues to be a sweet success!

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Persian Marmalade

Details from Sarah B. Hood's presentation at Fort York.

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Catherine Macpherson reviews Yvan Desloges' latest book.

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Poutine and Beyond: Continued

You'll have guessed by now that this is the bird we call the partridge. The passenger pigeon was called in Quebec *la tourturelle*, which comes from the Latin *turturilla*, a diminutive of *turtur*. And you can already hear where this is heading, right? *Turtur* gives us the English "turtle dove."



**Passenger Pigeon, Bird Gallery,
Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Ontario**

We may not think of moose and partridge when we think of Quebec cuisine. But what *do* we think of? I think of *tourtière* most of all, largely because my mother-in-law, whose heritage is Acadian, makes it so superbly. The name comes from the vessel in which it is made. In the 16th century, a *tourtière* was a pie pan for baking *tourtes*. In "The Long History of the *Tourtière* of Quebec's Lac-St-Jean" (*What's to Eat: Entrees in Canadian Food History* [ed. Cooke]), Jean-Pierre Lemasson traces the ancestry of the dish to a Babylonian recipe from 1600 BC. He also convincingly argues that although *tourtière* as we know it has been so identified only since Quebec's Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, it has "a profound symbolic resonance in today's Canada" and is "the culinary emblem of a culturally rich and complex country with a fierce pride in its French heritage." Amen. It may be time to invite myself to my mother-in-law's for dinner.

Among other popular Quebecois dishes are several that have specially interesting names. Consider, for example, *pouding chômeur*, pudding of the poor. While recipes vary, it is essentially a cake-like batter of flour and water, topped with brown sugar syrup. According to one source, it was born during the Great Depression, the creation of women factory workers in Quebec. The

word *pouding* is, of course, a close relative of English "pudding." And while most of us are reasonably familiar with pudding as a sweet dish, the word's origins depend on its older incarnation as a savoury. While its etymology is uncertain, the OED suggests the likeliest is from the Anglo-Norman *bodeyn* or *bodin*, meaning sausage. A *chômeur*, in Quebec, is one who receives *chômage*, welfare. So this is, literally, welfare pudding.

And it is here, as we talk about puddings, that poutine enters the story. According to Bill Casselman, in his vastly entertaining book *Canadian Food Words*, "Le pudding was in French print by 1678 to denote a pudding steamed in a cloth bag." In northern France, this word became *poudin*. So what else would you call thick-cut French fries smothered in cheese curds and gravy? Since its introduction in the 1950s, this pudding-like dish has been the bane of Quebec gourmets and the joy of junk-foodies.

There are several Quebec food words that seem to me to have no English equivalent. One of my favourites is *oreilles de crises*. You read it right: Christ's ears. They are pieces of salt pork grilled or fried, often associated with (and served during) the making of maple syrup each spring. There is, of course, a delightfully shocking tradition of anticlerical humour in Quebec that is not replicated in English Canada. And I can't help but cite the ultra-sober cautionary note provided by Wikipedia's entry on this dish: "Contrary to what the name implies, it is not religious in any way, and is not made from ears." Well, there's a relief.

Though they rate a mention under "Canadian Cuisine," there is no separate Wikipedia entry for *pets de soeur*. So I will just say that they are not actually made from the farts of nuns. They are dessert pastries that resemble cinnamon rolls. If you want to try them, there's a fine and traditional-looking recipe in Marie Cormier-Boudreau's splendid *A Taste of Acadie*. If you are presenting them to guests of delicate constitution, you may more politely call them *bourriques de soeurs*, or nuns' belly buttons. Or, for the truly squeamish, *rondelles* (slices) or *hirondelles* (swallows).

Continued....

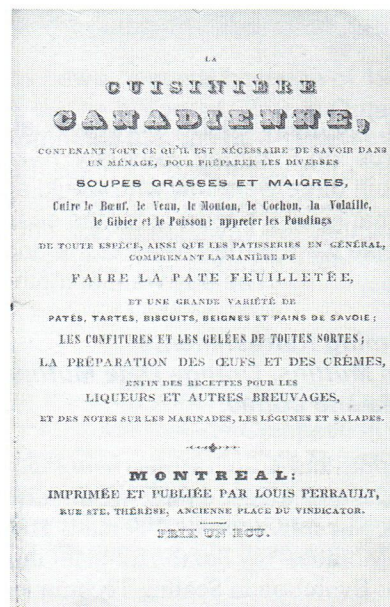
Poutine and Beyond: Continued

When I said that there was no anticlerical tone to English-Canadian food words, I suspect at least some readers immediately thought of their own examples to the contrary. It does occur to me now that in my own (nominally but non-practicing Protestant) family, the rump of the turkey was referred to as the Pope's nose. We don't do that anymore.

One final example: Acadians also make a doughnut-like confection from leftover bread dough, called *trous de soeur*, nun's holes. Enough said.

There is also in Quebec a double bread-loaf shaped like human buttocks, and known as *pain-fesses*. *Une fesse* is a buttock or bum-cheek. It is fair to note that in English Canada, 'buns' may either be eaten with dinner or sat upon.

Having now perhaps reached a sort of bottom, it might be nice to close on a higher plane. St. Catherine of Alexandria is widely known and celebrated as the patron saint of unmarried women, and is also the patron of haberdashers, archivists, and the University of Paris. But apparently her taffy is a Canadian invention. The story goes that Marguerite Bourgeoys, a major figure in the history of New France, made taffy as a treat for her students in order to celebrate the opening of her first school in Ville-Marie (Montreal). That school opened on November 25, 1658, and, since November 25 is St. Catherine's feast day, the treat was called *Tire Ste-Catherine*, St. Catherine's taffy. Because of the saint's care for unmarried women, it is suggested that the tradition arose among young women of making the taffy to give to eligible young men as a demonstration of cooking skill. Besides, back in English at least, such sweets may also be called "kisses."



La cuisinière canadienne, contenant tout ce qu'il est nécessaire de savoir dans un ménage, pour préparer les diverses.... Montréal: L. Perrault, 1840
Montréal : L. Perrault, [1840?] --
© Public Domain

Des Pâtés ou Tourtières.

Il n'y a que ceux au porc frais, qui se cuisent avec de la pâte au fond du plat; dans tous les autres, on n'en met généralement qu'environ une bordure de quatre doigts, tout autour du plat; puis on y place la viande avec partie du jus, jusqu'à la bordure, il faut employer un plat creux, et on suivra du reste les directions ci-dessous.

Au Porc frais.

On hache le porc frais fin avec oignon et assaisonnement, on le fait revenir dans la poêle, ensuite dans un plat garni de pâte que l'on couvre comme les pâtés ci-dessus.

Mad for Marmalade, Crazy for Citrus: CHC Event Review

Written by CHC members Fulvia della Schiava, Nancy Gyokeres and Irene Herzuk

All Photographs courtesy of Angie McKaig

Nearly 100 attended the fourth annual "Mad for Marmalade, Crazy for Citrus" on Saturday, February 19 at Fork York National Historic Site, but there were few who would admit whether they attended primarily for the food or for the sessions on historic cookery. People were turned away at the door, and what they missed!

The day went something like this:

Welcoming Refreshments

Lemon Muffins, Orange Date Muffins, Orange Gingerbread with tea and coffee.



A welcome and introductions were followed by an array of nine marmalade workshops located throughout the Fort's buildings, including the three we attended, "Mrs. King's Marmalade," by Carolyn Blackstock of Woodside National Historic Site in Kitchener, "Tomato Trends" by Janet Kronick of Dundurn National Historic Site in Hamilton, and "Meet Morabba" by Sarah Hood, an independent Toronto writer. The other workshops were "Pig Bladders & Brandy: Evolution in Sealing Techniques" by Mya Sangster, Lead Volunteer Historic Cook at Fort York; "Judging Marmalade Quality" by Pat Crocker, proprietor of Riversong Herbals, Neustadt; "Pudding, Pond, Sussex" by Rosemary Kovac, another Volunteer Historic Cook; "Marmalade with Asian Twists" by Shirley Lum, A Taste of the World Tours; "Citron Peel Smackdown: Citrus Fruit vs. Watermelon" by Amy Scott, Volunteer Historic Cook; and "Candied Peel" by the Senior Baking Teacher at Danforth Collegiate, Jan Main

Some workshops were literally hands on, such as Pig Bladders & Brandy. Leader Mya Sangster provided the equipment and ingredients in order to seal marmalade jars as early Canadians would. A circle of parchment or tissue paper soaked in brandy was placed directly on the marmalade. Take the pig bladder, place it like an undersized mitten over your fist and stretch as much as possible to allow for fitting over the tops of one or more jars. Tie securely and eventually the bladders will tighten like the skin on a drum.

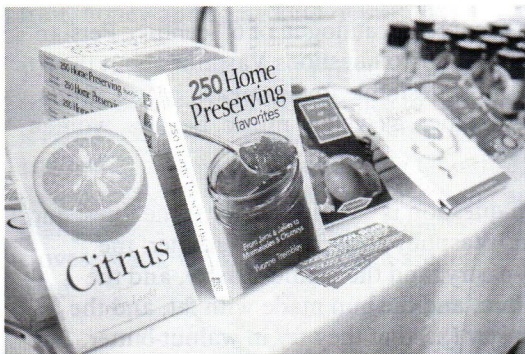
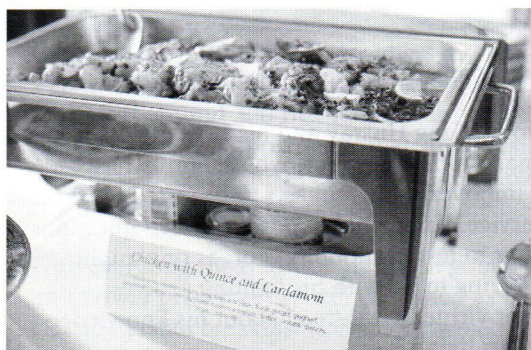
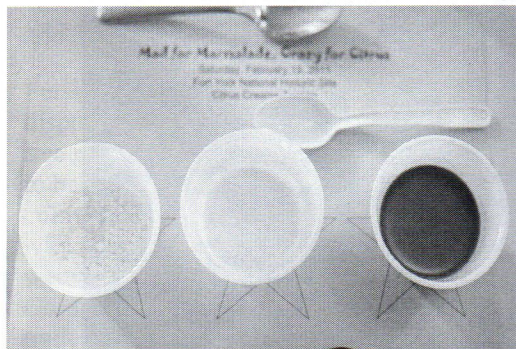
Marmalade Themed Lunch

Chicken with Quince and Cardamom, Couscous with Peas, Mixed Green Salad with Orange Dressing, followed by Pears Portuguese Fashion with Currants and Solid Syllabub.



The food offered was all prepared from historic recipes, many of which were included in the detailed program. Food alternated with workshops and the featured speaker and gave participants plenty of time to mix and chat. Bridget Wranich, Fort York's Program Officer for Foodways, headed a team who prepared the lunch in the Bunker Kitchen. She explained that the officers enjoyed marmalade in the early Fort York days, evidenced by the crockery found in the archaeological digs on the site. Preparing and serving the lunch were volunteer historic cooks Elizabeth Baird, Joan Derblich, John Hammond, Rosemary Kovac, Ellen Johnstone, Rosemary Rogers, Mya Sangster, Amy Scott, Kathryn Tanaka, as well as Peter Zalewski, Certified Chef de Cuisine, Berkley Hospitality.

Mad for Marmalade: continued



Keynote Speaker

Keynote speaker Joyce Lewis, a social historian of 19th-century Ontario, spoke on the history of citrus in Ontario during that period but prefaced her talk by reviewing the centuries-old recorded history of citrus. If you were around in 1878, you would have speared your precious orange with a fork and peeled down the skin to eat away the segments. In the early 1800s, you may have made orange wine.

Marmalade Contest

"You can hardly believe the wide variety of the entries," said Liz Driver, coordinator of the Marmalade Competition. "One entry, that from Chris Humphrey, winner in the Pure Citrus category, featured five different citrus fruits." The competition attracted more than 30 entries in five categories. They were judged on visual appeal, texture, aroma, flavour and "that certain something."

The first- and second-place winners received Bernardin Canning Sets and Preserving cookbooks respectively. Winners were:

Pure Seville Orange (Seville oranges only)

Patrick Forbes; Eva MacDonald

Pure Citrus - Chris Humphrey; Carolyn Crawford

Other Fruit (any other non-citrus fruit, may contain citrus)

Alexis Dunlop and Helen Smith; Christ Humphrey

Vegetable (any vegetable or fruit/vegetable combination)

Sarah Hood

Marmalade Baked Goods

Diane Vachon; Robert Henderson.

Over all Grand Prize Winner receiving a Kitchen Aid Mixer
Diane Vachon

A Marmalade Marketplace offered a wide variety of preserves, and old and current preserving-themes books. Mrs Dalgairns' Currie Powder, from an 1829 recipe, served as an additional fundraising element offered by Mary Williamson

Tours of Fort York completed the day-long fourth annual event sponsored by the Culinary Historians of Canada in partnership with Fort York National Historic Site. In mid-February the site was especially fitting with its open-hearth kitchens and wood smoke aromas.

Next year's event is sure to be sold out and it doesn't matter whether your interest is eating or learning. It is a winning combination.

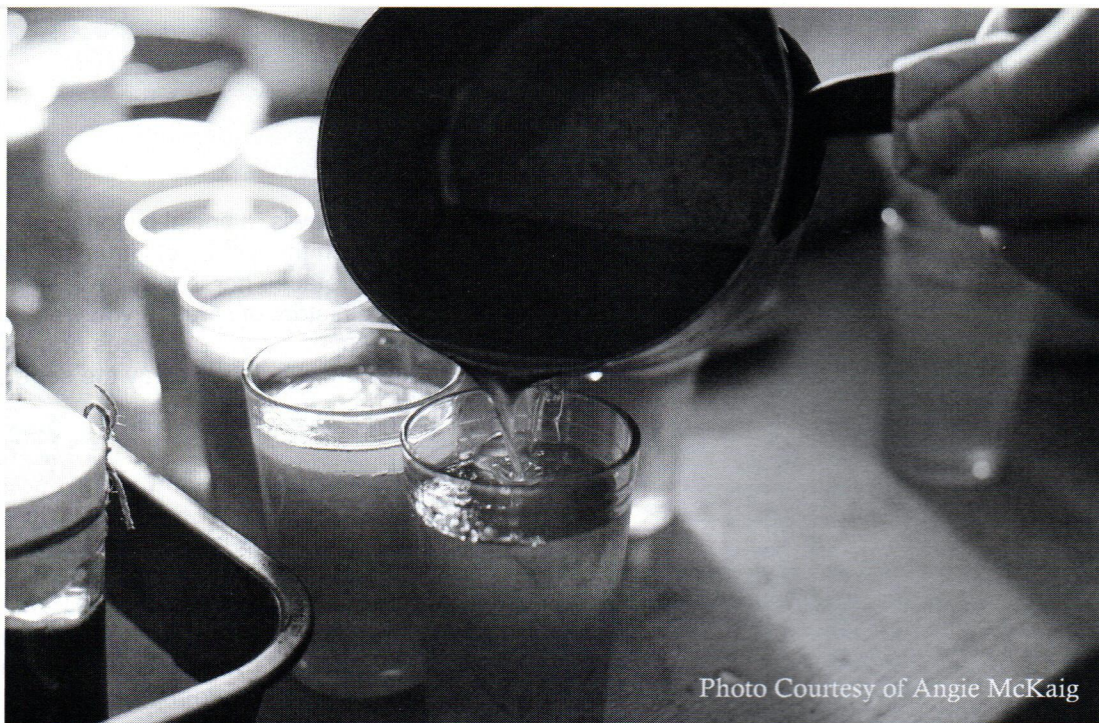


Photo Courtesy of Angie McKaig

Persian Marmalade Story

Sarah B. Hood

Sarah is an independent writer who lives in Toronto. She is a member of CHC. This text is based on the presentation she gave at the fourth annual "Mad for Marmalade, Crazy for Citron" event at Fort York on February 19, 2011.

The tradition of making marmalade out of quinces and bitter oranges goes back at least fourteen centuries in Persia (modern Iran), and likely even farther.

"For countless generations, the Persians have preserved all manner of vegetables, fruits, and flower petals, first in honey or molasses, and later in sugar to serve them as dessert or at the breakfast table," writes Forough-es-Saltanah Hekmat in his book *The Art of Persian Cooking*. But precisely how long ago did the tradition begin?

Sweets concocted of sugar, fruits and flowers would not only have been considered tasty, but would, it seems, have fit into a traditional philosophy of dining as an almost spiritual practice. Hekmat writes that "a healthful diet of vegetables, fruits, fish, fowl and certain delicacies composed of mixed petals and blossoms of roses was believed to have unusual powers that could transform a man into a gentle and noble creature."

We have some evidence for the long history of quince and apple preserves from a Pahlavi text entitled "King Husrav and his Boy," published and translated by

Jamshedji Maneckji Unvala.

In the story "King Husrav and his Boy" a noble young man named Vaspur, whose family has become impoverished, requests to be tested for the king's service. King Khusro poses thirteen questions to Vaspur to test his nobility; not, as one might expect, having to do with his fighting prowess, learning or virtue, but instead about his knowledge of luxurious living.

In what becomes a catalogue of 6th-century Persian fine dining, Khusro questions Vaspur about the best and most desirable fowls, meats, broths, fruits, grains and wines, as well as music, flowers, women and horses.

The fifth question is "Which pastry is the finest and the best?" Vaspur answers: "In summer: the almond-pastry, and the walnut-pastry, and the walnut-bun, and the bun made with fat, and the finger-pastry (...) that they fry in walnut-butter. But with the fruit-jelly that is squeezed out and filtered

Persian Marmalade: continued

from the juice of the apple and the quince, no pastry can stand the contest!" In other words, by the 6th century, Persian nobility already thought of quince and apple preserves as the best of all desserts!

Persian cooks had all the raw materials at their disposal very early on. It is thought that the quince tree may be native to Persia. There does not seem to be consensus as to where oranges were first cultivated, but some say bitter oranges first grew wild in Persia on the shores of the Caspian Sea, and were hybridized to produce the sweet orange in China, then returned to Persia by Portuguese traders. Najmieh Batmanglij, in her book *A Taste of Persia*, she points out that "The sweet orange ... took its western name from the Persian narenj, or bitter orange, while in Iran, the sweet orange is called porteqal, after the Portuguese merchants who imported it."

Clear evidence for the cooking of bitter orange preserves in Persia by about 1300 is found in these lines from the poet Bos-hac of Shiraz, about 1300, quoted in *The Art of Persian Cooking*: "Do not be grieved, O Sour Orange! Like the sweet orange, turn into preserves / And then your sourness will change into sweetness."

Sugar was also known very early in Persia; it was encountered in India by the soldiers of Darius I of Persia around 500 BC, and by those of Alexander the Great around 300 BC. Anne Wilson, in *The Book of Marmalade*, postulates that "the Persians may have been the first people to have employed sugar as a foodstuff" (as opposed to a medicine).

However long the tradition has been going on, fruit and flower preserves are still cherished as part of a classic Persian breakfast (*sobhaneh*), which consists of: tea and milk, bread and butter, cheese, eggs, fruit, honey and some kind of preserves.

Whereas the English and French jam-making traditions tend to use lemon juice to raise the acid level of preserves, Persians use limes. Also, writes Hekmat, "cardamom seeds are the favourite flavoring [sic] for all preserves. Rose water and orange blossom water are also common; ginger, cloves, mace, nutmeg and vanilla are less often used.

Here are some Persian jam and marmalade recipes to try:

Moraba-ye Havij: Carrot Marmalade with rose water, from the excellent food blog Turmeric and Saffron at Turmericandsaffron.blogspot.com

Moraba-ye Havij: Carrot Marmalade, a Food.com recipe using saffron and orange blossom water at Food.com/recipe/iranian-orange-carrot-jam-424003.

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CHC Program Review: Kitchen Tool Magic

Ed Warner

*Ed Warner is Editor of "Yesterday's Tools," The Newsletter of the Tool Group of Canada
The original full-length review originally appeared in "Yesterday's Tools," January 2011, 28:1*

At our last meeting [Saturday, November 13, 2010], the TOOL GROUP was pleased to entertain, as our guests, The Culinary Historians of Canada. Vice-President Liz Driver was introduced by our previous newsletter editor, Peter Myers. Liz is the author of a book documenting the history of Canadian cookbooks, called *Culinary Landmarks: A Bibliography of Canadian Cookbooks, 1825–1949*. Liz and her husband are rebuilding an 1890s farmhouse in Prince Edward County to duplicate the art of cookery as it was done in the period. Liz is also the Curator of Campbell House Museum in Toronto. She explained that, even though much of the "art of cooking" can be done with one's hands, it is the skilled use of tools that leads to the production of masterful dishes. Thus one of the interests of the Culinary Historians is the study of the evolution of such tools.

Liz introduced Eva MacDonald, who gave us a talk on the evolution of the cast iron cookstove. Eva told us that the introduction of iron stoves was a major transformation of kitchens away from the almost medieval "Open Hearth" cooking. She showed us floor plans of 19th century houses which, as iron stoves became prevalent, changed greatly. Eva said that "one must employ the five senses" in order to imagine what it must have been like to work in a kitchen before the introduction of the iron cook stove. In those days, the common practice was "Down-Hearth" cooking, which is just as it sounds. Cooking on an open hearth required the cook to stoop over the pots and the fires, in all that smoke and heat. Some more advanced fireplaces contained brick ovens, placed off to the side. Cookbooks, in that era, said Eva, emphasized the "QUALITY" of the fire, and the techniques of frying, baking, broiling, roasting and boiling over an open fire in their recipes. Cooking times were approximate, as the temperature of the fire could only be determined by the feel of the experienced cook, who knew how close to place her food to the fire, and whether the embers would hold a steady heat for the delicate art of baking.

Fly ash, heat, soot and smoke accompanied most kitchen tasks, not to mention the weight of the cast iron pots, which were especially awkward, usually being full of boiling liquid. The fire also provided an important source of light for the room, which would be gone with the advent of the iron cook stove. The choice of wood, and the drying of it, was very important. Houses in those days were built with the



Fiona Lucas (glass butter churn), Liz Driver (brass pot), and Eva MacDonald (iron baker)

kitchen fireplace at one end, on an exterior wall, and that one was much larger than other fireplaces in the house.

Cooking stoves for use in kitchen are descended from cast iron heating stoves, which were brought to North America in the late 17th century from Europe. These were soon to be manufactured in the new world, and in Canada, one notable manufacturer was the St. Lawrence Forge, in Quebec. Heating stoves were altered to suit the use of cooking by dividing the fire-box into separate chambers, e.g. ovens. Also the tops were fitted with openings and lids which could hold "double-boilers" and other pots. It did take some time for the designs to be developed to the extent that they no longer leaked smoke into the room. Soon the ovens were lined with "fire-bricks" (refractories). This moderated the heat, making it much easier to control the temperature, giving better baking.

In 1835, Joseph Van Norman is credited with the manufacture of the first iron cooking stove in Ontario. His stoves were touted as "for simplicity of construction and efficiency of the fire, and a really good oven." However, in England, the free-standing iron cook stove was not readily adopted, rather, a portion of the fireplace was closed off and a hot-water tank, on one side, and an oven, on the other, were fitted. The stoves that did come from England were not well received, as they were intended to use coal for fuel, and did not work well using wood.

During the 1840's and '50's, many designs were 8

Kitchen Tool Magic: continued

patented, with fierce competition amongst manufacturers. By 1855, the Copp Brothers, of Hamilton, Ontario, advertised that "Their stoves could not be surpassed" for beauty and functionality. By the late 1800's, cast iron cook stoves became almost universal in their use in domestic kitchens. However, the fact that the light from the fireplace was now gone, necessitated a re-designing of the placement of windows and introduces sources of artificial light.

Thus it was, that the Cast Iron Cook Stove, more than any ANY other single force, brought a radical change to the "Art of Cookery."

In the next segment of the meeting, Fiona Luca, Eva MacDonald and Jim Ross [The Tool Group of Canada's Past President], demonstrated cast iron cookware, the "skillet," or cast iron frying pan, being one of Jim's favourites. Other stove-top utensils were shown, including a fabulous brass pot, which, as Jim says, "cannot be made to boil over." This fact is especially useful in the heating of foods containing high proportions of sugar, such as candies, jams and jellies. Jim showed a small cast-iron fixture, a toaster, which one would place on top of the stove, put your bread slices on all four sides, and turn them over when done.

Eva and Jim showed a cast iron roasting pan, complete with an inside shelf, presumably for your Yorkshire Puddings, and with vents in the ends of the lid. Jim says his favourites are what is called "Gem Pans." These are cast iron molds for making rolls, small breads, and donuts.

Fiona then read from *The Female Emigrant's Guide*. In "Dairying," the section on Butter Making, Fiona explained that the necessary conditions for butter making are, cool in Summer, and warm (meaning above freezing), in Winter. This is the environment in which the milk must be stored, and the butter made. Proper ventilation is also a must. The simplest churn is always the best, both for effectiveness, and ease of cleaning. In cold weather, salting the cream, makes for easier churning. In hot weather, standing the churn in cold water, prevents souring. When finished, the butter should be washed in cold water, contained in cheesecloth, and gently beaten against the side of the churn, to remove unwanted milky parts.

Fiona then went on to read a section from Kate Aitken's first auto-biography, *Never a Day So Bright*. This article is about her childhood, and her mother,

looking after the butter making. "The last most-dreaded clean-up was the butter cellar. It was cold and dark, and crammed with firkins of butter." It was explained how the butter was packed, and stored for the eventual taking to the market. Kate wrote: "With the intimate first-hand knowledge of the workings of butter, we ate very little of it."

Next Jim and Jane Ross, and Fiona Lucas, explained and demonstrated the process of making butter. Jokingly, Jim says, "First one must master the business of milking the cow." The milk, now obtained, is left to settle so that the cream may [be] scooped off the top, and put into the churn. In modern times, dairy farmers now use a machine called a "Cream Separator," which works by centrifugal force. Jim says it takes about 45 minutes to churn the cream into butter, and it is hard work. After that, the butter is put into jars, if storing is desired, or it is worked in a shallow bowl, to remove any impurities, then pressed in 1 pound "bricks," and then wrapped. Jim showed us "Butter Stamps," with which the maker could imprint his name on the butter, and Jane showed "Butter Presses," used to make "Butter Pats," which would be served in fine restaurants, or hotel dining rooms. Jane has a fine collection of "Butter Pat Dishes." Tool Group member, Gord Meinecke, told us how he used the butter stamps, in his youth, in his native Germany.

Jane Ross shows us tools called "Scotch Hands" which look like salad spoons, and are used to make small round balls of butter, to be placed into the "Butter Pat Press," to make pats of butter. These would be served immediately.

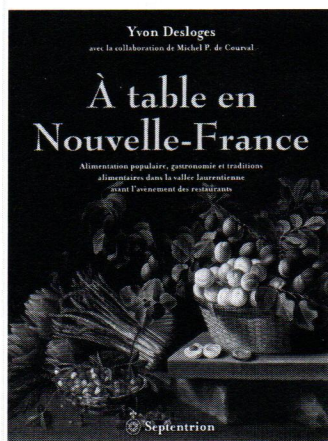
Liz Driver told us about the preparation of meats. In previous centuries, there were no such things as "Meat Grinders," as we now know them. Meat would have to be chopped, as finely as necessary, with knives. As example is a dish known as "Tortierre," some say, a French meat pie. The dish is quite different when made with chopped meat rather than ground meat. The tool known as a "meat grinder" was originally called a "Meat Chopper." Similarly, a "Shepherds Pie" would be quite a different dish, if made with chopped meat, instead of ground meat. Tool Group member Louis Theriault brought with him an assortment of meat grinders, and gave us an explanation of each one. Louis said that meat grinders could be used to make fish cakes, sausages, ground beef and pork, ground nuts, and grated cheese. He said, "Keep your fingers out."

The Tool Group President, Brian Elliot, thanked the three ladies from the Culinary Historians. The members were very please with their show.

Book Review: *À table en Nouvelle-France*

Catherine Macpherson

Catherine is a freelance culinary writer, researcher, and broadcaster who holds a Master's degree in Gastronomy from Boston University. She lives in Montreal.



Yvon Desloges, *À table en Nouvelle-France; Alimentation populaire, gastronomie et traditions alimentaires dans la vallée laurentienne avant l'avènement des restaurants.*

Québec. Les éditions du Septentrion, 2009. 240 pp. \$29.95, ISBN 978-2-89448-601-6

As a historian (retired) with Parks Canada, author Yvon Desloges has at his disposal one of the most important collections of artefacts pertaining to life in New France. His impressive, in-depth knowledge of this collection, and his personal passion for the culinary history of early Quebec, brings much to his latest book, *À table en Nouvelle-France*. Published in conjunction with the Château Ramezay museum's exhibit on the food traditions of Quebec (for which Desloges served as associate researcher), *À table* paints a vivid portrait of the dining habits of French colonists from 1608 to 1791

Desloges traces for us the evolving diets of these French inhabitants. From the first contact with native tribes from whom the early colonists learned what rich edibilia the forests, fields, and waterways of this new, rugged landscape provided (corn, pumpkin, dozens of fruits, berries, roots, nuts; a plethora of game, fish, and shellfish) to the eventual influences of British colonists, the reader gleans rich insights into the foodways of New France. It's a portrait of a primarily rural (agricultural) society, but one that is informed by the hunting and gathering traditions of the aboriginals, food preparation techniques of the Old World, and foodstuffs both indigenous and imported. Country and city life intertwine around food exchanges, both commercial and social in nature.

À table is brimming with charts and tables detailing everything from military rations to imported foods (capers, specialty hams and cheeses, olives, prunes, chocolate). Citations from primary sources are

plentiful, enriching the text for even the most rigorous of historians. The book gains added dimension and appeal from the engravings, photos, and historical recipes scattered throughout.

Desloges includes over 40 period recipes in a separate section. He hopes *À table* delivers "an enriching culinary experience" that encourages the reader to "live [their] history." Recipes are organized by where the dishes were consumed and by whom: the farmer's table, the voyageur's camp, the innkeeper's hearth, the French governor's kitchen. The recipes from the main text are reprinted here, helping to contextualize them and providing easy access for the cook.

After appreciating the thoroughness of detail presented in the first section, I found myself occasionally wishing for more notes to accompany the dishes. In a recipe for a nun's pear tart, for example, we do learn a few facts about local pear varieties at the time, and that our common Bartlett was formerly known as Bonchrétien. But as an amateur culinary historian, I was left wondering why the recipe called for icing sugar versus granulated (does it better approximate the sugars of that period?) and why the finished tart was sprinkled with rosewater. Was this a common or rare ingredient used only by certain classes? How available were such aromatics in New France? Some answers are found in the main text; having notes or page references next to the recipes might further enrich the cook's experience of the book.

Recipes have been adapted to meet contemporary cooking times and quantities; some give distinct nods to authenticity: a recipe for stewed rabbit suggests using bear fat, if you can find it. As with many culinary history books, the point is not to faithfully reproduce a dish but to retrace and rediscover lost techniques and traditions. And in this, *À table* gives us a true taste of culinary life in New France.

Exhibit Review:

À Table: traditions alimentaires au Québec / Let's eat: the traditional food of Québec

Mary F. Williamson

*Retired as Fine Arts Bibliographer and Adjunct Faculty at York University, Mary writes frequently for Culinary Chronicles and is also a great source of illustrations. Her latest book, **Just a Larger Family**, an edited collection of her mother's letters, is due out in April.*

À Table, which has been exhibited since May 2010 at the Château Ramezay in Montréal, has been extended to April 24 of this year. The exhibition offers an inspiring opportunity for culinary historians who are responsible for programming in historic house museums to gain fresh ideas about how to present the history of food and cooking within the constraints of a series of small rooms, in this case a 17th-century house. Impressively, the presentation avoids nationalistic bias by exploring the Aboriginal, British, and American influences on culinary culture in Québec. The exemplary French-language book that accompanies the exhibition, Yvon Desloges's *À table en Nouvelle-France*, concludes with the end of the French colonial period in 1763, but the exhibition takes us through to modern days. The visitor appreciates that it is for holidays that Quebecers especially like to recreate traditional dishes, which through many decades have been transformed, using old and new ingredients. An extraordinary revelation reflects how Quebec society has changed since the 18th century: when the newspaper *Le Devoir* held a contest in 2007 to choose a Québec national dish, the winner was shepherds' pie!

But to turn to the exhibition itself: one enters it through two rooms that represent the earliest years of Nouvelle France. They are decorated with colourful blow-ups of old prints, paintings, portraits, framed engravings, and maps, with signage on the walls and in the display cases in French and English. Displayed are examples of foods, cooking and table ceramics, eating utensils, food processing and fireplace tools, and bottles and preserving jars. By the third room one has entered the British period, a Keiller marmalade pot and an anchovy paste bottle prominently displayed. With the new administration came a new beverage, tea. Several pieces from a 57-piece monogrammed tea set have been borrowed from the Musée de la Civilisation. An interactive, low-tech exhibit reminds visitors that potatoes were a relatively new commodity because French colonial

authorities feared that potato growing would interfere with the cultivation of corn.

In the final room, visitors are introduced to the most popular cookbooks of Québec households, a few of which have been reprinted in recent years, and their authors – from *La Nouvelle Cuisinière* (the edition exhibited is 1879) and *Les recettes des Fermières du Québec* (1915, reprinted 1978) through to Canada Starch's *Les meilleurs recettes du Canada* (1930) and Jehane Benoît's *La Nouvelle Encyclopédie de la cuisine* (1972).

At the conclusion we see commercial product pamphlets of the mid-20th century, a doughnut-making tool with its original box, and an issue of *American Cookery*, *The Boston Cooking School Magazine*. The long list of credits includes lenders and sponsors, numerous archivists, translators, and researchers together with designers, installers, and photographers who make up the team that presents the traditional foods of Québec in an intimate setting.



Reconstruction of a seventeenth century kitchen. Musée Chateau Ramezay, Montreal. *A Taste of History*, Marc Lafrance & Yvon Desloges, p.23

Calendar of CHC Upcoming Events

THE CULINARY HISTORIANS OF CANADA, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

SATURDAY APRIL 2, 2011

McLAUGHLIN LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

GUELPH, OFF THE SHELF

TOURS, PRESENTATIONS,
& REFRESHMENTS
12 – 4 PM
\$20 MEMBERS
\$25 NON-MEMBERS



Tour the extraordinary Canadian Culinary Collections featuring 13,000 volumes & manuscripts with Kathryn Harvey, Head of Archival and Special Collections
A visit to McCrae House National Historic Site, built c. 1858, birthplace of John McCrae.

Refreshment recipes from
The King's Daughters Cook Book
Published 1908, by the Guelph Circle of the King's Daughters
Visit us at: culinaryhistorians.ca

www.culinaryhistorians.ca

Submissions: We welcome items for the newsletter; however, their acceptance depends on appropriateness of subject matter, quality of writing, and space. All submissions should reflect current research on Canadian themes. The Acquisitions Editor reserves the right to accept or reject submissions and to edit them. The Acquisitions Editor's contact information is 416-781-8153 or fiona@culinaryhistorians.ca.

Upcoming themes:

Summer 2011, Number 69 – Canadian Cookbooks and Gender Publication Date: August 1 (extended)
Autumn 2011, Number 70 – Asian Foodways in Canada Publication Date: November 1
Winter 2012, Number 71 – Kitchen Collectibles in Canada Publication Date: February 1
Spring 2012, Number 72 – Foodways of Old British Columbia Publication Date: May 1
Please contact the Acquisitions Editor if you wish to write on an upcoming theme, or to propose another. Deadline for copy is six weeks prior to publication.

Newsletter Committee: Fiona Lucas (Acquisitions Editor), Janet Kronick (Layout Editor), Eleanor Gasparik (Copy Editor). For contributing to this issue, the Newsletter Committee thanks David Arnason, Cuisine Canada, Charmian Christie, Gary Draper, Dorothy Duncan, Angie McKaig, Sheldon Posen, and Mary F. Williamson.
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MISSION STATEMENT

The Culinary Historians of Canada is an organization that researches, interprets, preserves and celebrates Canada's and Ontario's culinary heritage, which has been shaped by the food traditions of the First Nations peoples and generations of immigrants from all parts of the world. Through programs, events and publications, CHC educates its members and the public about the foods and beverages of Canada's past. Founded in Ontario in 1994, CHC welcomes new members wherever they live.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Members enjoy the quarterly newsletter, *Culinary Chronicles*, may attend CHC events at special member's rates, and receive information on food-history happenings. Members join a network of people dedicated to Ontario's culinary history.

Membership fees:

\$30 Cdn for One-Year Individual, Household and Institution

\$55 Cdn for Two-Year Individual, Household and Institution

American and international members may pay in American dollars. **Membership year:** January 1 to December 31

Mailing address: Culinary Historians of Canada, 260 Adelaide Street East, Box 149, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5A 1N1

Website: www.culinaryhistorians.ca

Email: culinaryhistorians@uoguelph.ca

2009–2011 Executive: President: Bob Wildfong; Vice President: Liz Driver; Past President: Fiona Lucas; Secretary: Marguerite Newell; Treasurer: Amy Scott.

Committees: Program Chair: Liz Driver; Newsletter Chair: Fiona Lucas; Membership Chair: Amy Scott; Electronic Resources Chair: Angie McKaig; Outreach and Education Chair: vacant; Hamilton Program Co-ordinator: Janet Kronick.

THE BUSINESS OF COOKBOOKS:

Honouring the past whilst leaping forward.

CHC'S annual spring lecture given by Alison Fryer

Monday, May 16, 2011 7pm – 9pm
\$15 includes refreshments. Pre-registration advised

Creating and selling cookbooks has undergone radical change in the last 35 years. The discussion of food has never been more compelling as now, but are we creating more cooks or just educated eaters? Alison will discuss why we need cookbooks more than ever.

Location: Campbell House Museum
160 Queen Street West, Toronto
NW Corner of Queen & University, at Osgoode Subway stn.
416-596-0227 x 2
campbellhouse@belinet.ca
www.campbellhousemuseum.ca