

The Culinary Historians of Ontario

Autumn 2000 Number 26



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.

Culinary Query

“I would appreciate hearing from anyone who has information on Dora E. Fairfield, compiler of *Dora's Cook Book* published in Bath, Ontario, in 1888. Although born in 1862 (and baptized Mary Ham Fairfield), she was part of a prominent Eastern Ontario family.

As far as I know, this is the only work that she ever published. She married J.S. [?] Stevenson, part of another prominent Eastern Ontario family. When, I do not know, nor do I know when they moved to San Diego, California where she died in 1941.”

John Coleman, Kingston, ON

Dora's Cook Book; containing over one thousand tested and tried recipes, furnished by leading ladies of Canada and the United States, compiled by Dora E. Fairfield, Bath, Ontario is a rare cookbook, although published by a well-known Toronto publishing house (Hunter, Rose and Co., 1888). It is a volume of 311 pages, bound in cloth. I have identified only one Canadian public location for the book (the Lennox and Addington Museum and Archives, Napanee) and two American public locations (the Los Angeles Public Library in California and the University of Iowa Library). Four individuals are known to own the book. The only reference to the book is by Patricia Beeson, who reprints two recipes in her; *MacDonald Was Late For Dinner* (1993).

The compiler's parents, Charles D. Fairfield and Sarah Minerva Davy of Bath, Ontario, (married 1861), had two daughters, both born in Stratford:

Dora Estelle, called Dolly, whose baptismal name was Mary Ham Fairfield (born May 17, 1862); and her younger sister, Birdie Perry Fairfield, whose baptismal name was Hannah Perry Fairfield. By 1871, the family had moved to Bath. In the same year that Dora's cook book was published, 1888, her mother died on August 31. The next year on October 19, at Fargo, North Dakota (where her brother-in-law was a jeweler), Dora married William Henry Stevenson (May 12, 1850-May 11 1945, Vancouver, British Columbia). W.H. Stevenson owned a piano factory in Kingston. Dora died on June 11, 1941 in San Diego, California, and is buried there in the Greenwood Mausoleum, as are her sister and brother-in-law. Her daughter, who married a mining engineer, had three children (two boys and a girl) and I have traced the two children of one of the boys, i.e. Dora Fairfield's great-grandchildren, who may be able to provide more information about their great-grandmother.

At the time Dora's book was published, in 1888, she was twenty-six years old and unmarried. Despite her young age, she professed a long interest in cookery. As she writes in the 'preface': 'this is essentially a cook book. I have thought it best to omit the subjects, "Social Observances," "The Internal Arrangement of Your Home," "Etiquette,"

1-2	Culinary Query
3	Minutes of CHO meeting
4-5	Summer Kitchen article/ CHO directory
6	Culinary Couplets
7	Book Review
8	Culinary Calendar

etc., and leave these for specialists in such departments. I have devoted many years of my life to the collection and trial of the best recipes obtainable.' Dora's comment about "Social Observances" and other omitted subjects is undoubtedly a reference to the type of material that introduced *The Home Cook Book*, the best-selling Canadian cook book of her day, first published in 1877. In that book, 'Housekeeping,' 'Table Talk,' 'Dinner Etiquette,' 'Social Observances,' 'The Little Housekeepers,' 'Our Susan's Opinions of a Kitchen,' and 'Utensils' precede the recipes. Most editions of *The Home Cook Book* were printed by Hunter, Rose, the publishers of *Dora's Cook Book*. Both books conclude with a section of menus.

On the title-page Dora proudly identified her recipes as from both American and Canadian sources and the recipes names often identify the origin, for example, Mrs. Gen. Sherman's recipe for 'Claret Punch' on page 263 or Bay of Quinte Cake and Ontario Cake on pages 185-188 respectively. The inclusion of American recipes is not surprising, given her family's Loyalist roots on her father's side. Also Dora's mother spent some part of her formative years in the United States, when at a young age, she and her sister (Dora's Aunt Mary) had been sent to live in a convent (probably Episcopal or another Protestant denomination) in Monroe Michigan, after their mother (Dora's grandmother) died.

I am sure that there is more to learn about *Dora's Cook Book* and its compiler. That Dora turned to Hunter, Rose as a publisher is intriguing. Why are there apparently so few copies surviving, given that Hunter, Rose was a major Toronto publisher and the publisher of the hugely successful *The Home Cook Book*? I would welcome any thoughts on this question. Much of the above information is from the Davy family file, page 92, H.C. Burleigh Collection 2324, Queen's University Archives. Information about Dora Fairfield in the Fairfield family file, page 14, in the same collection, is not as extensive and may be inaccurate. I have yet to search the family papers at the Lennox and Addington Museum and Archives.

Written by Elizabeth Driver, author of the forthcoming, *A Bibliography of Canadian Cookbooks, 1825-1950*.

GASTRONOMICA

The Journal of Food and Culture

Gastronomica is a brand-new scholarly journal from the University of California Press due to commence publication in February 2001. A multi-disciplinary publication, *Gastronomica* aims to make readers aware of food as an important source of knowledge about cultures and societies. One of its missions is to unite the many segments of the food world, with articles from any field that deals with the history, production, uses, and depictions of food.

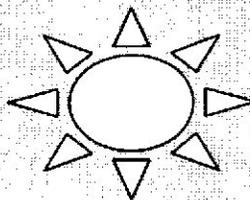
Combining the latest research with an appreciation for the pleasures and aesthetics of food, *Gastronomica* will provide a forum for sharing ideas, provoking discussion, and encouraging thoughtful reflection on the history, literature, representation, and cultural impact of food.

Here's a sampling from the first issue:

'A Plea for Culinary Modernism: Why We Should Love New, Fast, Processed Food', 'Genetically Modified Foods and Ethics', 'Sicilian Cheese in Medieval Arab Recipes', 'The History of the Bagel', 'The Winemakers of Tuscany' and reviews of: *Making Sense of Taste; Food: A Culinary History; Art, Culture & Cuisine; and The Oxford Companion to Food*.

For more information, email Susan Alexander at journals@ucpress.ucop.edu or fax her at (510) 642-9917).

Gastronomica also has a web page at: <http://www.grastronomica.org>



Minutes from the meeting of the
Culinary Historians of Ontario
 September 23, 2000
 Montgomery's Inn, Etobicoke ON

Present:

Carolyn Blackstock, Carrie Herzog, Lori Jamieson, Liz Driver, Elizabeth Nelson-Raffaele, Ed Lyons, Amy Scott, Bob Wildfong, Eva McDonald, Mya Sangster, Fiona Lucas, Christine Ritsma, Bridget Wranich

Purpose of meeting

This meeting began with a chronology of the history of the **Culinary Historians of Ontario** by Fiona Lucas. The organization began in Spring of 1994 with an initial newsletter followed by a successful potluck dinner in the Mess kitchen at Historic Fort York. CHO continued on with a conference **From Rations to Riesling: Remembering Ontario's Food Heritage** in September of 1996 at Doon Heritage Crossroads. Many food events, partnerships and workshops have been hosted by CHO and we have continued to produce a quarterly newsletter.

Co-founders Fiona Lucas, Christine Ritsma and Bridget Wranich decided after previous discussions that it was time to turn to members to make some changes to rejuvenate the Culinary Historians of Ontario. We want to sustain the group, increase our profile, and develop a vision that we collectively want to pursue. The purpose of the meeting was to begin working on this vision.

What point are we at now?

Christine Ritsma reported that account balance for the Culinary Historians is at \$ 600 and that about \$120 is used quarterly to publish the newsletter, with the postage being the majority of the cost. We also exchange newsletters with ten other culinary groups which include, Chicago, New York, Houston, Connecticut, Food History News, Boston, Los Angeles, etc. Ed Lyons suggested that if we got our membership numbers up that perhaps we could get more of a discount with Canada Post.

What's our philosophy?

- Some of the questions posed during the discussion:
- *Do we need to change our mandate?*
 - *Should we introduce more special events and have regular meetings and conferences?*
 - *Do we want to be more social in our approach and less scholarly?*

After some discussion it was decided that we would like to maintain a scholarly approach with the possibility of expanding in other directions. It was agreed that regular meetings would help with the further development of events, workshops and perhaps another conference. The best time to have these meetings was thought to be after the newsletter was released.

Increased affiliations?

Should these include Ontario Historical Society, Multi-cultural History Society, other cultural groups, i.e.-Italian, Chinese, Black, Portuguese, Latin American ...? More affiliations would be great for CHO, but this requires a great deal of time. It was decided that CHO needs committees to be responsible for the different aspects of

what we do. These committees were identified as being Newsletter and Special Events. The idea of an overall steering committee was discussed but eventually dismissed as unnecessary.

Suggestions for special events, workshops, lectures Speakers were unanimously considered a must. Many names were brought forward. Suggestions for events such as more hands-on workshops, theme restaurant visits with guest chefs or speakers, road trips and attending more related conferences.

Committees... Any Volunteers?

Lori Jamieson suggested that we needed another committee to care for membership maintenance and growth. It was agreed that in total there would be three committees. The committees would be **Newsletter, Special Events and Membership**. Members volunteered to join committees and are as follows:

Newsletter

Ed Lyons, Amy Scott, Carrie Herzog, Melanie Garrison, Bridget Wranich
 Responsible for 1 year – 4 issues, layout and mailing. Oversee the development of new columns i.e. cookbook of the month Liz Driver, family recipes Ed Lyons, gardening with Bob Wildfong, Culinary musings Fiona Lucas.

Special Events

Elizabeth Nelson Raffaele, Eva McDonald, Liz Driver
 1 yr. of planning itinerary for CHO. Will start with list from this meeting and plan events. Offer from Liz Driver to talk about cookbooks. Find speakers and other groups to affiliate with.

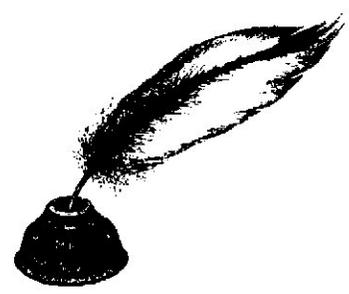
Membership

Lori Jamieson, Carolyn Blackstock, Carrie Herzog, Christine Ritsma
 1 yr. of responsibility. Develop a new brochure, membership drive web site and e-mail.

If there are interested CHO members that would like to contribute to these committees, please email or phone Bridget Wranich or Christine Ritsma for further details. Phone numbers and email addresses are included on the last page of this newsletter.

Conclusion

The meeting ended with members expressing pleasure at all that was accomplished and all were energized and eager to start a new phase in the development of the **Culinary Historians of Ontario**.



EXCUSE ME, MAY I SEE YOUR BACK KITCHEN?

What have people done with their back kitchens which were once the centre of farm activity during the hot summer months?

By Barbara Weiler

When we drive through the Ontario countryside, as we did through Bruce Country recently, I cast curious eyes at the vintage farmhouses. More precisely, I study the addition at the back of the farmhouse traditionally referred to as the "back kitchen" or the "summer kitchen." I would love to stop and say to the owners, "Excuse me, but may I see your back kitchen?"

It is my understanding that the original purpose of the summer kitchen was to provide a place to prepare meals in summer without heating up the main part of the house. In my earliest remembrances, dad dismantled our cook stove and reassembled it in the back kitchen when the warm weather arrived in May. The centre of our lives was transferred from the large room where we congregated in the winter to the summer kitchen and the back porch. This left the rest of the house cool and relatively tidy, since we spent most of the summer days outdoors.

There was an inevitable excitement about "moving out to the summer kitchen," rather like the feeling that cottagers have when they open it for the first time each year. Life in the summer kitchen got us down to basics. The stove, a cupboard for essential cooking and eating utensils, hand pump with sink, washstand holding drinking pail and dipper, as well as table and chairs provided for our rudimentary needs. A couch and pillows added a little comfort, and calendars from local businesses adorned the walls.

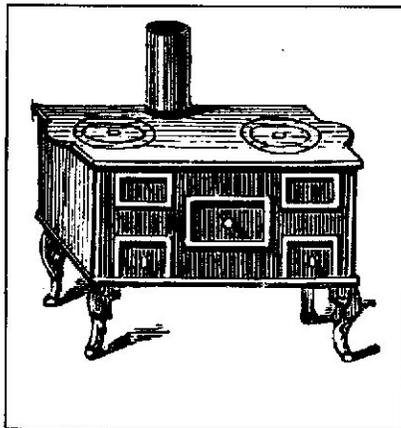
Mother did all the canning, preserving, jam

making and freezing of foods for the winter season in the summer kitchen; the appetizing odours of bubbling strawberries and sugar or pungent dill and vinegar wafted through the air, and the heat enveloped us as we stepped inside. It became the hub of life for the months of summer.

Flies are always a problem on the farm and Dad installed the screen door in the spring and removed it in the fall. We heard the admonishment "Close the screen door, you're letting the flies in" frequently. When flies got really bad Mother would cover all the surfaces, close up the doors and windows and spray for flies—DDT I suppose, though it makes me shudder to think of it now. Later we swept up the flies and scrubbed the surfaces of tables and cupboards. I wonder now which was more harmful, dozens of flies or DDT? Fly stickers hung from the ceiling also helped keep the fly population under control.

We spent many happy times in the summer kitchen. I learned to read there, pushing the kitchen stool up beside the table while my mother washed the cream separator, and I struggled, sounding out the words of "Mary, John and Peter." As teenagers we gathered in the summer kitchen to hash over the evening after dances, picnics or ball games.

Sometime in September, after a few cool days, we arrived home from school to find that Mother had decided it was time to move back into the house proper. This certainly did not mean that the summer kitchen was no longer useful—far from it.



The back kitchen gradually became a depository for all the flotsam and jetsam of our lives through the autumn. When the snow came, we left the skis and sleighs and skates there, handy. The empty cans, bottles and old newspapers accumulated, waiting for the snow to melt so we could dispose of them properly. In short, it became a place to stash things that we did not want or need in the house proper. "Put it out in the back kitchen" was a familiar phrase. Family and visitors swept boots there or removed them if too muddy, and a broom always stood by the door.

It was through the back kitchen that almost everyone entered our home. A visiting child once expressed astonishment upon learning that the front door was ours too. He thought it must certainly belong to some other family, so seldom was it used. By March, Mother could be heard to mutter, "First warm day, I have to get at that back kitchen," the entranceway having become a bit of an embarrassment to her when visitors arrived. The clean up progressed gradually, as the spring days became warmer. Cans and bottles were sent to the dump (no recycling then); skis and sleighs were banished to the shed; cupboards were sorted and scrubbed. At last the room with its dark wood paneled ceiling regained its inviting homey appeal.

Now when we drive by country homes I wonder how farm families use their back kitchen. Do they call it something else, the mudroom, the sun porch? Has it been winterized for use all year round? Has it become home to a hot tub? Do interior decorators write articles about how to organize and beautify it? Would that household guru Martha Stewart have edicts to hand down concerning function and decor? Do owners use it to display kitchen artifacts, old butter churns or antique rolling pins? Is it still a depository for all sorts of items in the winter, and do farm women still mutter, "First nice day, I have to get at that back kitchen"?

Barbara Weiler is a retired Family Studies teacher that lives in St. Catharines, ON. She is now pursuing a second career as a freelance writer.

CHO was kindly given permission by the Rural Voice and the author to reprint this article.

CHO Member Directory

(continued from the last issue)

GIBSON HOUSE MUSEUM

5172 Yonge Street, North York, ON M2N 5P6

Tel: (416) 395-7432 Fax: (416) 395-7442

gibsonhouse@city.toronto.on.ca

The Gibson House Museum interprets the lives of David and Eliza Gibson and their seven children in the year 1851. Foodways programming is the key to the interpretation of the Gibsons' lives and reflects their Scottish background, the 105-acre farm on which they lived, their "middle class" lifestyle, and even their reform political and social beliefs. Food programming includes educational, community children's camps and historic cooking classes.

STECKLE HERITAGE HOMESTEAD

811 Bleams Road, Kitchener, ON N2G 3W5

Telephone/Fax: (519) 748-5719

jsteckle@web.net

The J. Steckle Heritage Homestead is a 10.2-acre heritage property. The farm was settled in 1833 and has remained in the hands of the family with many of the original buildings intact. A heritage teaching kitchen will be completed by spring 2001 that will offer food-related programs to school groups and adults.

Jacey Ann Culham, Artist

55 Madill Crescent, Lindsay, ON K9V 5X3

Tel: (705) 878-0727 Fax: (705) 878-4064

Collector of pre-1950 Canadian cookbooks produced by manufacturers of food. Also a collector of 1920's and 30's "kitchenalia", and produces miniature food and vignettes depicting early kitchens.



CULINARY COUPLETS

Thanks to CHO member, Mary Williamson for passing this poem onto our readers.

CULINARY COUPLETS

By a rhyming epicure.

Always have lobster-sauce with salmon,
And put mint-sauce your roasted lamb on.

Veal cutlets dip in egg and bread'crumb-
Fry till you see a brownish-red come.

Grate Gruyere cheese on maccaroni,
Make the top crisp, but not too bony.

In dressing salad, mind this law,
With two hard yolks use one that's raw.

Roast veal with rich stock gravy serve;
And picked mushrooms, too observe.

Roast pork sans apple-sauce, past- doubt,
Is "Hamlet" with the Prince left out.

Your mutton-chops with paper cover,
And make them amber-brown all over.

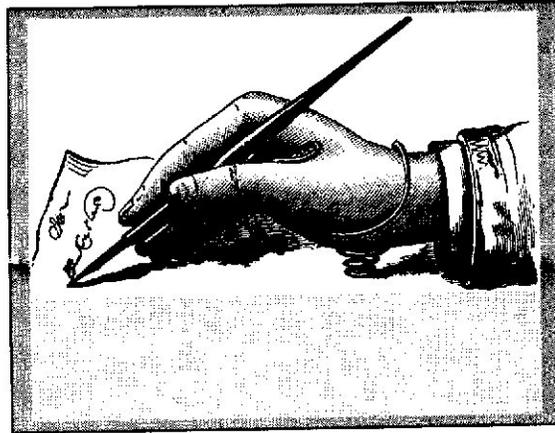
Broil lightly your beef-steak—to fry it
Argues contempt of Christian diet.

Buy stall-fed pigeons. When you've got them,
The way to cook them is to pot them.

Wood-grouse are dry when gumps have
marred'em,
Before you roast'em, always lard'em.

To roast spring chickens is to spoil'em—
Just split'em down the back and broil'em.

It gives true epicures the vapors
To see boiled mutton, minus capers.



Boiled turkey, gourmands know, of course,
Is exquisite, with celery sauce.

The cook deserves a hearty cuffing
Who serves roast fowls with tasteless stuffing.

Smelts require egg and biscuit powder,
Don't put fat fork in your clam-chowder.

Egg-sauce? – few make it right, alas!—
Is good with blue-fish or with bass.

Nice oyster-sauce gives zest to cod—
A fish, when fresh, to feast a god.

Shad, stuffed and baked, is most delicious—
'Twould have electrified Apicius.

Roasted in paste, a haunch of mutton,
Might make ascetics play the glutton.

But one might rhyme for weeks this way,
And still have lots of things to say.

And so I'll close—for, reader mine,
This is about the hour I dine, -5 P.M.

--THE HAWKEYE

*Poem taken from The New Dominion Monthly,
Montreal, February, 1868*

BOOK REVIEW

Sisters in the Wilderness: The Lives of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill
Charlotte Gray
(Toronto: Viking-Penguin Books Canada Limited, 1999)

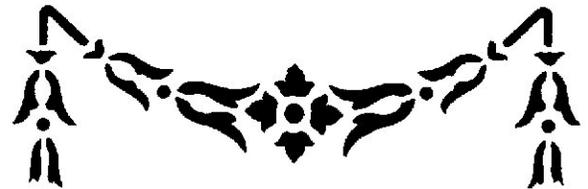
Most Canadians are probably familiar with the works of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill, most notably *Roughing it in the Bush* and *The Backwoods of Canada*, which tells the stories of each sister's experiences as immigrants to the new world. *Sisters in the Wilderness* is an absorbing biography which fleshes out the story of the intertwined lives of these two women in fascinating detail. From their early years growing up in the relative comfort of the English middle class, to their marriages and subsequent emigration to Canada, this account explores the harsh reality of life in the backwoods of Upper Canada, and their struggles to create homes for their expanding families. Of course, it also delves into the sisters' writing history, as they both endeavored to maintain literary careers, out of financial necessity and their own personal needs to express themselves, at a time when female writers in Upper Canada were virtually unheard of. Their efforts were not as successful during their lifetimes as they would have liked, but they have left a rich legacy, which serves to educate us today about the hardships and hopes of the pioneer family. They left us with valuable information about the native plants, recipes, remedies, and general advice for living in a new and unfamiliar environment.

Charlotte Gray gives readers little known accounts of the sister's childhood, which I found to be very interesting. It serves to give us a sense of how each sister's personality developed. Since the two sisters had very different outlooks on life, their eventual experiences of emigration reflected these

differences. Catharine looked on the brighter side of life, and was much more optimistic than Susanna, who had a much harder time getting used to her new life in the colonies. Gray uses letters, between the sisters and from family members back in England, personal papers, and their published works to illustrate and add substance to her historical account.

I found the book to be very interesting. It is a well researched, and well written narrative of the lives of two independent women, who lived through a fascinating period of Canada's history.

Written by Cindy Brouse, Registration Coordinator, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.



FAMILY FARE

Starting in the next issue, Family Fare will introduce a new column devoted to old family recipes. I am sure there are many CHO members that have tried and true family recipes that you would like to share.

Next issue, I will initiate this column with an old family recipe of mine: a recipe for 'schmalz' and I will give you some history about it as well.

Members interested in contributing to this column can forward their recipes to:

Ed Lyons at: lyons@indirect.com.

Culinary Calendar

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

November

Candy Making Workshop

Woodside National Historic Site
Kitchener, ON (519) 571-5684
November 18 9:30 – 12 pm
Learn traditional candy making.
Pre-registration required.
Cost \$20 including taxes.

Ah, What an Excellent Thing is an English Pudding

Historic Fort York (416) 392-6910
November 12 11 – 4 pm
Learn in our historic kitchen using recipes from period cookbooks. Pre-registration required.
Cost \$45 plus GST.

Christmas and Hogmanay Treats

Gibson House Museum (416) 395-7432
November 18 10 – 2 pm
Delicious Scottish holiday foods to prepare and taste.
Pre-registration required. Cost \$25.

Stir up Sunday

Montgomery's Inn (416) 394-8113
November 19 & 26 1 – 4:30 pm
Learn the secrets of the Victorian kitchen table by working in the historic kitchen and preparing 19th century receipts (mincemeat & plum pudding)
Pre-registration required. Cost \$30.

Preparing for the Festive Season

Colborne Lodge in High Park (416) 392-6916
Weekends in November 12 – 4 pm
Tour the Lodge and see how Victorians prepared for Christmas and learn more about Christmas cake and Plum pudding in the historic kitchen.

Kids in the Kitchen – Cooking Workshop

Montgomery's Inn (416) 394-8113
November 25, December 2 & 9 9:30 am – 12 pm
Participate in 19th century holiday traditions by making seasonal decorations & preparing festive food in the Inn's open hearth kitchen.
For children 9 – 12 yrs. Pre-registration required.
Cost \$12 or all 3 Saturdays \$30.

December

Cocoa Time

Woodside National Historic Site (519) 571-5684
December 2 & 3 1 – 4 pm
Enjoy a cup of hot cocoa amidst a Christmas setting.

Christmas by Lamplight

Black Creek Pioneer Village (416) 736-1733
December 2, 9 & 16 6 – 9:30 pm
The Village offers 3 evenings to treat yourself to traditional tastes, holiday crafts, musical entertainment and more. You can also feast on a traditional Christmas dinner with all the trimmings.
Pre-registration is required.
Lamplight Programme: \$25 per person
Christmas Dinner: \$34 including taxes and gratuities.

Gaslight Evenings

Spadina Historic House (416) 392-6910
December 15, 16, 21, 22 7 – 9 pm
Meander through magnificent Spadina, lit only by gaslight and candlelight, as you listen to the Steinway piano and sample Christmas nibbles of the Edwardian era.
Cost \$ 20 plus GST/PST.

Mincemeat Pomanders and Paperchains

The Gibson House Museum (416) 395-7432
December 2 & 3 12 – 5 pm
Enjoy the sights and smells of an open hearth kitchen and help to stir the traditional Christmas pudding.
Seasonal treats from the kitchen included in the tour.

Hogmanay

The Gibson House Museum (416) 395-7432
December 31 12 – 2 & 2:30 – 4:30 pm
Enjoy good music, the presentation (and taste) of the haggis, & delicious holiday foods prepared from traditional 19th century recipes. Pre-registration required. Cost \$10 adults \$7.50 children + GST

Culinary Credits

Editorial Team

Fiona Lucas (416) 534-1405
Christine Ritsma (519) 272-1949
Bridget Wranich (416) 690-7062

Thanks for this issue to Liz Driver, Mary Williamson, and Cindy Brouse.

Our address is: 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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