

Culinary Chronicles

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Kate Aitken in her kitchen at Sunnybank Acres, near Streetsville, Ontario, 1955 (photograph courtesy Kate Aitken family).

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Message from the President (and Editor)

It's an honour to be the guest editor of this special **anniversary issue** of our newsletter. It was ten years ago this spring that Issue No. 1 announced the formation of our association. This issue brings more exciting developments on several fronts.

First, you will notice that the newsletter has a new name – *Culinary Chronicles*. Credit for the title goes to Fiona Lucas, and for the title design, to Fiona and Elizabeth Nelson-Raffaele.

Now, turn on your computer and type 'www.culinaryhistorians.ca' in your web browser and you will find CHO's new website, launched on 15 February 2004. The site was created for us by the University of Guelph Library, and our domain name takes you to the actual site on the university system:
<http://www.lib.uoguelph.ca/archives/culinary/cho/index.html>.

From our new website, you can email CHO, download a membership form, note upcoming events, find reports of recent events, search our newsletter index, read selected back issues, and send in your culinary queries. Don't miss the 'Resources and links' section, which we hope will assist you with your research by leading you to new sources of information. From 'Resources and links' you can link to a bibliography of Canadian culinary history, the Culinary Collection website of the University of Guelph, other culinary collections, other food history sites, CIHM's catalogue of pre-1920 Canadian publications available on microfiche, and Early Canadiana Online. And be sure to explore the links to historic recipes, historic kitchens in Ontario museums, and historic food industries and restaurants. We will be making additions to the website on a quarterly basis, so if you have a contribution to make to 'Resources and links' (perhaps information about a historic food industry in your town or a local museum kitchen), we would love to hear from you. Just send your message to our new email address!

Our new email address – culinaryhistorians@uoguelph.ca – will improve communications in our organization. Any emails sent to this address will be redirected to the appropriate member of your Board. If you have an email address, but have not received any CHO Newsflashes or the launch notice for the website, I encourage you to send your email address to culinaryhistorians@uoguelph.ca, flagged to the attention of the Membership Chair.

The launch of the CHO website coincided with that of the website for the **Culinary Collection in the Archival and Special Collections at the University of Guelph**, a significant contribution to the support of food-history scholarship in Canada. As noted above, you can access this site through the 'Resources and links' section of our site, or at: <http://www.lib.uoguelph.ca/archives/culinary/index.html>.

You will find information about the Una Abrahamson Collection, Helen Gagen Collection, Edna Staebler Collection, and Canadian Cookbook Collection, and best of all, a growing selection of digitized cookbooks. Under 'Links,' you can choose the CHO site, a history of Canadian cookbooks, Cuisine Canada, and direct links to important international food-history sites and library collections. The CHO congratulates the University of Guelph Library on the launch of the Culinary Collection site. And we extend a huge thank-you to the university library for constructing the CHO site for us.

Another important goal achieved this spring was **affiliation with the Ontario Historical Society**. One of several benefits that flow from affiliation is that we are now a legal entity, an Ontario non-profit, non-shared corporation – perhaps not as exciting a transformation as our leap into cyberspace, but significant nonetheless!

The theme of the newsletter's anniversary issue is **Kate Aitken**, one of Canada's first and national culinary icons. I will let the contributions of Neil Brochu, Fiona Lucas, and Margo Oliver tell her story, but what could be a more appropriate subject to mark the birthday of an association devoted to Ontario's culinary history than one of its biggest stars, born and raised in the village of Beeton, northwest of Toronto? The reprint this spring of the 1945 first edition of *Kate Aitken's Canadian Cook Book* by Whitecap Books has reawakened interest in this pioneering food journalist, teacher, broadcaster, and entrepreneur. We are grateful to Whitecap for contributing to the mailing costs of this newsletter issue and draw your attention to the enclosed order form for the publisher's Classic Canadian Cookbook Series.

The next two issues of *Culinary Chronicles* will be edited by Amy Scott (summer) and Mary Williamson (autumn). If you are interested in editing a future issue of the newsletter or taking on the position of **Newsletter Chair**, please contact me via the new CHO email address: culinaryhistorians@uoguelph.ca.

It's been an exciting and satisfying start to CHO's anniversary year! I look forward to our next meeting.

Liz Driver, President

Kate Aitken's Canadian Cook Book: "It looks complicated but it's worth all the work and time"

By Neil Brochu

This article is a revised version of a paper Neil wrote in 2002 for Professor Patricia Fleming's History of Books and Printing course, in the Faculty of Information Studies at the University of Toronto, as part of his work toward a Master of Museum Studies degree. Currently, he is a historic interpreter at Colborne Lodge and Todmorden Mills Heritage Museum and Art Centre in Toronto.

Probably a good many housekeepers were lucky enough to find a book hanging on their Christmas trees which, when its wrappings were off, turned out to be white with red stars and a green signature reading '*Kate Aitken's Canadian Cook Book*.' (Published by *The Standard Montreal*, \$1.50)¹

Kate Aitken's Canadian Cook Book was my grandmother's only cookery book. Margaret Tomalin consulted its pages on a regular basis while raising a family of seven children and in 1971 purchased a reprint because her earlier edition had not survived twenty years of use. Many family favourites originated from the pages of Kate Aitken's book, including Chelsea Buns, Macaroni and Cheese, Sausages De Luxe and Chili Sauce. My grandfather recently gave me my grandmother's second copy of Aitken's cookbook, now tattered with its cover attached to

the spine with masking tape and numerous handwritten recipes tipped between the pages. I do not reach for Aitken's cookbook as often as my grandmother; however, it occupies pride of place in my cookery book collection.

The *Montreal Standard* published the first edition of *Kate Aitken's Canadian Cook Book* in 1945. W.M. Collins Sons and Co. produced the next three editions in 1950, 1953, and 1964. Tamblyn Drugs, Ogilvie Flour, and Good Luck Margarine sponsored the 1950 and 1953 editions. The final version was reprinted eleven times and by 1987 had sold over 750,000 copies. With each new release the book was altered slightly by adapting the design and content to suit modern culinary taste. The title also was changed by 1973, when 'Canadian' was dropped and the title simplified to *Kate Aitken's Cook Book*. In 1982 Totem Books added the phrase

'Canada's All Time Favourite Cookbook' to the cover. The design was always simple and straightforward and recipes were never illustrated. The success of this seemingly modest Canadian cookbook can be attributed to Aitken's ability to define Canadian cuisine and follow current culinary taste as well as her popular profile in the Canadian media during the mid-20th century.

It appears that Aitken's love for food was fostered at an early age by her father's general store in Beeton, Ontario. In 1914 Aitken and her husband Henry Aitken bought land and built a farm. Kate Aitken started the local chapter of the Women's Institute and began selling fruitcakes at Christmas and raising prize-winning livestock. She sold eggs and chickens to city customers and occasionally added jars of preserves that she had made to order. This gave rise to weekend hampers that were full of specialty goodies that she sold to private clients and food shops in Toronto. When the Women's Institute ran the Women's Building at the Canadian National Exhibition in 1923, Aitken was put in charge of cooking demonstrations and by 1938 she was in charge of the women's division at the Exhibition.

The hamper-selling venture was hit hard by the Depression, so out of necessity in 1932 Aitken went to Montreal to teach a thirteen-week cooking class in local movie theatres. The classes were successful and continued for the next five years across the country, nationally raising her public profile. In 1934 she began broadcasts sponsored by Canada Starch for CFRB radio in Toronto. In these daily chats she relayed news, gossip, and a new recipe for listeners to try. After a short stint as a war correspondent, in 1948 Aitken began a daily program for the CBC called 'The Good Neighbour,' in addition to her CFRB broadcast. It was estimated that during the 1950s thirty-two percent of all Canadians listened to one of her radio programs. Aitken's public persona was not limited to live appearances and radio broadcasts; she was also women's editor at the *Montreal Standard* between 1941 and 1951. Her column consisted of household hints, recipes, and hobby ideas. She also relayed cooking and household advice in her column 'Ask Tamblin's' that appeared in the *Star Weekly* during the 1950s.

Kate Aitken's Canadian Cook Book was a natural outgrowth of her work for the CNE, the *Montreal Standard*, the *Star Weekly*, CFRB, and the CBC. Her cookbook was built out of her own files, which were apparently filled with clippings and handwritten recipes. She stated on the binding of the 1950 Tamblin and White Circle Pocket editions that, '[w]e often laugh at ourselves for clipping and copying recipes, for saving those bits of paper long after they're torn and creased, for hoping that eventually we will get round to trying the recipe.'² Aitken's comment on the tendency to hoard recipes for another day is one almost any cook can relate to. It was her candid wit, perhaps as much as her culinary expertise, that endeared her audience to her and sustained the popularity that made her a household name for generations of Canadian homemakers.

Aitken's familiar witty commentary was in evidence throughout the book. Each chapter included an introduction and subheadings where foods and recipes were narrated. By the third edition her presence was even more evident. The 1964 introductory note to sweet soufflés, absent from earlier editions, reads: 'Easy to make, fussy to bake and as temperamental as a TV Star is the perfect soufflé. But served fresh from the oven a soufflé is a delectable dessert and a feather in the cap of a smart cook.'³ This tongue-in-cheek reference to the delicate constitution of the soufflé was entertaining and perhaps encouraged Canadian cooks to have a go at it, although I don't think the tactic worked on my grandmother – a soufflé was far too tricky to try at home.

Besides her introductions, there were the 'Notes to Brides' that appeared throughout the volume. These italicized entries augmented recipes or provided practical tips intended to guide the cook towards culinary adventure. The 1964 edition contained a bridal note under the 'Party Cakes' heading in which she noted that 'One dollar invested in shredded coconut, food colouring, decorettes and silver shot makes all the difference in the world to your cake. To colour coconut measure it into a bowl, then add three or four drops of vegetable colouring. Toss lightly with the fingers till colour is even throughout.'⁴ This advice created vivid images of puffy pink jelly roll and layer cake tastefully garnished for a

Kate Aitken holding a pink-coconut-covered cake, on the cover of the 1950 White Circle Pocket edition of her *Canadian Cook Book*.



special occasion. Janet March remarked in her 1946 *Saturday Night* review of the cookbook, 'I haven't seen the inside of a bridal veil for many years but I read the notes with great interest.'⁵ These entries were eye catching, informative, and definitive of Aitken's personable style.

It was not Aitken's witty character alone that supported her fame in Canadian homes. Her recipes

were reliable and they worked. She believed in rigorous recipe testing in her kitchen stocked with standard cooking equipment common in kitchens across the country. Some sources suggest that at times she tested over twelve different recipes a week.⁶ Aitken's instructions were basic, easy to follow, and intended to guide either the novice or more experienced cook. The layout of the cookbook was simple and unadorned. March, in her

review, found this feature appealing as she commented that 'the contents deserve a handsome layout. I've read a lot of pretty poor cook books which have been done with fancy illustrations, but then often the illustrations turned out to be the best part of the book.'⁷ The humble facade was conceivably targeted towards a middle-class audience, conservative with money and skeptical of stylish gimmickry or fancy illustrations. The simple paperback was inexpensive, familiar, and trustworthy, like the contents found between its covers.

The design was not the only feature of the book influenced by simplicity and economy. The recipes themselves show the inclination for thrift, economy, and resourcefulness that was generated by the Depression and World War II. Recipes like Eggless Chocolate Cake and Budget Fudge Cake, found on pages 44 and 49 of the 1950 Tamblyn edition, are evidence of the frugality that appealed to homemakers during that period. The majority of the recipes in the book, labeled budget, economy, or otherwise, have conservative ingredient lists and produce moderate quantities. An undated clipping from Aitken's *Star Weekly* column, 'Ask Tamblyn's,' found in a 1950 edition of her cookbook, exclaims how 'Tamblyn's are going economy minded' and instructs her readers how to 'economically' can pineapple and rhubarb by reducing sugar. Sugar and other costly ingredients were reduced in Aitken's thrifty recipes, making the final product cheaper and more appealing to budget-minded readers.

Aitken's recipes not only capitalized on the desire for thrift, they also characterized the Anglo-Canadian palate during the mid-20th century. Her recipes were definitive for the period and sought to teach homemakers how to prepare traditional dishes. Aitken's travel writings provide some of the best insight into her culinary taste and perhaps even that of her audience. In a 1956 article for *Macleans Magazine*, a caption appeared under Aitken's photograph that read, 'Should you eat foreign food? The answer is yes to fresh fruit like this in Nairobi, Kenya, says Kate, but a lot of so-called exotic foreign dishes are indigestible.'⁸ She also suggested that Canadian travelers 'take plenty of milk-of-magnesia tablets: the food, especially in Europe, is often indigestible.'⁹ Obviously Aitken displayed the nor-

mal skepticism towards unusual foods typical of her generation. Her book relied on tried and true recipes that were popular with Canadians and would please their appetites.

The pleased appetite was the concern of Chapter 19 of the 1950 Tamblyn edition, entitled 'Eat and Keep Slim.' Aitken proposed a ten-day diet 'for women who really want to lose weight and are sure they will look and feel better when those extra pounds are gone from the waist, hips and thighs.'¹⁰ For three pages the diet provided detailed lists of food quantities for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Moderation and controlled eating habits appeared to be her advice and starvation was strictly prohibited. Saccharin was suggested as a sugar substitute and a teaspoon of baking soda taken daily was recommended for women trying to shed extra pounds. Aitken's closing remarks, in capital letters, warned the dieter not to 'START NIBBLING AGAIN OR FIRST THING YOU KNOW YOU WILL HAVE GAINED ALL YOU HAVE LOST.'¹¹ The diet was absent from the 1964 edition of the cookbook, perhaps because her advice was out of fashion or because more room was needed for new culinary explorations.

The revised edition of 1964 included several other changes from the original versions. The new book, written nearly two decades after the first release by the *Montreal Standard*, reflected a subtle shift in culinary taste. It explored, among other things, 'Canadian Provincial Recipes.' In this section Aitken defined some typical foods found in the country's ten provinces. Characteristic dishes and ingredients were selected for each region. Aitken noted in the introduction to the chapter that 'there is not one typical Canadian food - there are a dozen.'¹² The recipes crossed the country and began in British Columbia with Caribou Short Ribs and concluded with Joe Batt's Codfish in Newfoundland. The attempt to define a national culinary identity was particularly resonant with Canadians as the country approached its centennial. Again, Aitken's cookbook was tailored to the tastes and interests of her audience, a practice that ensured continued success with Canadian homemakers.

Other topics and recipes were added in an attempt to update the cookbook in 1964. New chapters enti-

ded 'Casseroles for Entertaining' and 'Famous Name Dishes' modernized and broadened the scope of the book. The casserole chapter was developed to help busy homemakers entertain guests. Each casserole was designed to serve twelve, but of course ingredient lists were flexible. The Shrimp Creole Casserole, the Chili Con Carne (Red Hot), and the Party Casserole, all call for chili powder, an ingredient absent from earlier versions of the cookbook. Other casseroles provided novel methods of cooking traditional favourites like ham with pineapple, turkey, or spare ribs in a new and easy 'one dish' format. The 'Famous Name Dishes' explored culinary specialties from around the world. Aitken mentioned that 'while this is not the type of food we normally serve, for a special party it does make a conversation [sic] piece.'¹³ The chapter gave instructions for such dishes as Chicken Marengo – Napoleon and Asparagus a la Pompadour. Clearly, by the mid-1960s, some Canadians were beginning to explore new ideas in cooking. Kate Aitken's cookbook was a trusted friend and a reliable source for Canadian cooks, and helped to slowly expand the country's culinary horizons.

The twenty-third chapter of the 1964 edition was entitled 'Your Daughter's Second Trade – Homemaking.' The introduction to this new chapter opened with the suggestion that 'You're a lucky young mother if you have a small daughter who is the apple of your eye.'¹⁴ The passage continued to describe the happy life this young girl would have and suggested the importance of proper schooling in domestic arts. The chapter had teaching suggestions and recipes for girls the age of four through to the time they were 'launched.' The addition was geared towards the first generation of Aitken readers now raising daughters that might one day have university degrees, careers, and families. With a sound introduction to homemaking and *Kate Aitken's Cook Book*, a second generation of Aitken readers easily came to fruition judging by the number of reprints produced throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

Aitken guided generations of Canadian cooks through the trials and tribulations of daily food preparation. Whether making roast beef, parsnips, instant coffee, or 'tea for 100,' *Kate Aitken's Canadian Cook Book* was a trusted source. Aitken's cookbook was also entertaining, accessible, and

definitive of Anglo-Canadian cooking in the mid-20th century. Although I read most of the recipes for interest's sake, I always reach for Kate Aitken when I'm making raspberry pie to find out how much corn starch I need, when I get the urge for chili sauce, or when I'm feeling homesick for my grandmother's Chelsea buns. Aitken's wisdom lives on for another generation through nostalgia and necessity.

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End Notes

- ¹ March, 30.
- ² Aitken, *Kate Aitken's Canadian Cook Book*, Tamblin and White Circle Pocket editions, 1950.
- ³ Aitken, *Kate Aitken's Canadian Cook Book*, 1964, 150.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.
- ⁵ March, 30.
- ⁶ Cochrane, 54.
- ⁷ March, 30.
- ⁸ Aitken, 'Ten Ways to Enjoy your Travels,' 18.

⁹ Ibid., 51.

¹⁰ Aitken, *Kate Aitken's Canadian Cook Book*, Tamblyn and White Circle Pocket editions, 1950, 274.

¹¹ Ibid., 276.

¹² Aitken, *Kate Aitken's Canadian Cook Book*, 1964, 273.

¹³ Ibid., 284.

¹⁴ Ibid., 293.

Margo Oliver Reflects on Kate Aitken and Her Cookbook

Margo Oliver (Margaret Oliver-Morgan) is best known for the food column she wrote for Weekend Magazine from 1959 to 1982, and for her several cookbooks, especially the 1967 Weekend Magazine Cook Book. Weekend Magazine was part of the Montreal Standard, the same company for whom Kate Aitken worked in the 1940s.

Oddly, though I never met Kate Aitken, I feel I owe her a debt. Kate (and one or two of her contemporaries) opened the way for all of us, who were or are working in the food area, to move into **business**, writing, broadcasting, teaching, and many other fields. These women were the pioneers who made it **easier** for us to follow.

My interest in food was stirred early by my 'good-cook' mother and by 'Mrs. A' (as she was **introduced** on her radio program) among others. Long ago Kate was in our house in Winnipeg – by radio, of course. I remember her cookbook in our kitchen, too. I think our copy was protected by a red-checked oil-cloth cover. I know the book was used in many Canadian kitchens over the years since it was first published by the **Montreal Standard** in 1945.

Now the original *Kate Aitken's Canadian Cook Book* is available again. It has been **reproduced by Whitecap Books** and has an added introduction by Elizabeth Driver and a history of Kate by her family. I am fascinated by this history. I had no idea Kate involved herself in so many things. She was a real **Renaissance woman!**

Even though one must be of a 'certain age' to remember this remarkable person **who meant** so much to Canadian women through her many activities and her daily radio shows, we can still **enjoy this** cookbook today – even if just for the reading. Cookbook lovers are known to take them to bed for **happy late night** browsing. Those readers will love the folksiness of this one.

Here are a few of the things that delighted me: 'Gems' to describe muffins; mincemeat made with green tomatoes; desserts we seldom hear of now, such as Blanc Mange, Floating Island, and Bavarian Cream; special notes appearing after some recipes, for example, my favourite following a rice pudding, 'Note to Brides: Save the rice water; it's a grand starch for thin curtains, collars and cuffs.' Nothing **wasted** in those days!

There's a warning from the current publisher on the opening page of the book to remind cooks that the original edition dates from 1945 and that ingredients, methods, and cooking times **may be** different now. That is certainly true. Meat cooking times need to be checked against present-day charts. Rotary beaters and yeast cakes are seldom used these days and our canning jars have lovely snap tops rather than glass tops with rubbers and zinc rings.

Still, it's fun to read these charmingly practical and nostalgic recipes, menu guides, and health tips. And since many of the recipes are for appealing comfort foods, most of them are easy to adapt for use today. I'm sure 'Mrs. A' would like that!

Never a Day So Bright:* A Review of Kate Aitken's Childhood Memoirs

By Fiona Lucas

Fiona, a co-founder and current Past President of the Culinary Historians of Ontario, works as a Senior Interpreter at Spadina Museum in Toronto.

... looking back on those days, we can remember no sorrows but only joys, no hardships but only well-fed bodies, well-nourished minds, and the soft beds into which we fell at night after feet were washed and prayers duly said. Spring, summer, fall and winter – life for us was good. (p. 215)

Like a novel that pulls you into the seasonal rounds of precocious childhood, Aitken's warm and fuzzy anecdotal memoir is a lot of fun. She grew up in Simcoe County, in the village of Beeton, near Guelph. Her father was one of two rival shop-keepers; his building, R. Scott's Dry Goods, still stands on Main Street. She convincingly recreates the 'timeless' world of a late Victorian Ontario village – British Presbyterianism without a dark underbelly. She either didn't experience the darkness or refuses to acknowledge it; I couldn't decide.

Kate and her six siblings ran freely in the dusty summer streets and snowy winter fields. She was a middle child, but we don't receive much sense of the other children as individuals, although the boys were collectively mischievous, and Bruce, the eldest, was a heroic figure to the younger ones. Kate was no angel herself. Her parents, Robert and Ann Scott, however, are lovingly portrayed in detail. Robert, stern but generous, a bit careless and trusting with money, was reliant on his wife's continual good sense. Ann was a skilled and house-proud housewife and cook, who loved to dance and laugh, and win ribbons for her baking. Clearly, the Scotts were a loving family, although occasionally you get a whiff of old family politics in Aitken's words.

Aitken's sensibility may be nostalgic, but she has recorded many factual details on how a pre-World

War I village shop functioned. I discovered much while reading. Did you know the biggest shopping time, in Beeton at least, was Saturday evenings from seven to midnight? That was when many farm families would come to town to buy their weekly supplies. She describes in detail the 'tiresome' and 'smelly' annual spring cleaning of the butter cellar by the whole Scott family, when the



The frontispiece of *Never a Day So Bright*, drawn by the book's illustrator, Frank Newfeld, depicts Kate in front of her father's dry goods store, circa 1900.

accumulated firkins of butter, which had been brought in by farm women to exchange for goods, had to be transformed into thousands of single pound-packages to be sold by her father to Toronto wholesalers. The whole symbiotic economy between the farms and the village merchants is well-described.

For a food careerist, Aitken comments surprisingly little on food. Mostly it is asides, with occasional anecdotes, like the description of her mother's turn to host an afternoon tea or the making of chilli sauce in mid-September or brown-sugar pie at a

pioneer barn-raising. By the end, though, you understand how much she appreciated the deliciousness of plain, fresh foodstuffs.

I bought Aitken's book at a second-hand bookstore on a whim, and I'm glad I did because it was an educational, amusing read. But I hope her childhood was as idyllically exciting as she portrayed it.

*Published by Longmans Green & Co., Toronto, New York and London, 1956. Aitken wrote a second memoir, covering her adult life, called *Making Your Living Is Fun*, Longmans, Green & Co., Toronto, 1959.

The Archaeology of Culinary History Symposium

By Maggie Newell

Maggie, CHO's Secretary, works at Zion Schoolhouse, a City of Toronto historic site, where she assumes the role of a schoolmistress from 1910.

Archaeologists, friends of Montgomery's Inn, and culinary historians gathered at Montgomery's Inn on Saturday, 21 February, for this day-long symposium. Participants enjoyed the hospitality of the Inn, with homemade muffins to start the day, an appropriate 19th-century lunch, and a beer tasting to finish. When we weren't eating and drinking there were seven informative speakers who took us in chronological steps from prehistory to the present.

The speakers reinforced the connections between material culture research and culinary history. Historic recipes only tell part of the story of food history. This report will focus on the morning sessions in the expectation that the CHO members who presented in the afternoon will have their papers published in future issues of *Culinary Chronicles*.

In the first session Paleoethnobotanist Rudy Fecteau introduced us to evidence of aboriginal foodways in the form of carbonised plant remains found in an archaeological context. An experienced teacher, he first engaged our senses of taste and smell and boosted our blood sugar, by providing the commmeal muffins and maple syrup to enjoy with our morning coffee. Corn and maple syrup have been used in North America since prehistoric times.

Rudy demonstrated the flotation method used to reclaim carbonised plant materials from an archaeological dig. Very simply, bags of soil are dumped in water, and the floating carbonised material is scooped off the top for further analysis. Carbonisation – or exposure to fire – preserves plant material, such as seeds, that would not otherwise survive in the soil for hundreds of years. Proximity to fire also often indicates the plant was being used as food; either the seeds have fallen out of the cooking pot, or they are in the general area of the cooking fire.

Charred wood associated with cooking fires can reveal the types of trees and shrubs used as fuel and provide clues to the local forest ecology and plant food resources. Archaeological remains in Ontario point to the availability of black walnuts, butternuts, hickory nuts, and fleshy fruit with pits, such as plums.

Corn, beans, and squash are known as the 'three sisters' in Native culture; they are the traditional agricultural staples that sustain life. All three were introduced into Ontario from the south. Archaeological evidence shows that corn was introduced by 500 AD and was cultivated all over the province by the 15th century. Sixteenth-century accounts describe cornfields with plants tall enough for European travellers to get lost in.

The introduction of both corn and beans resulted in increases in human population in Ontario. Corn alone provided a more reliable food base than hunting and gathering. Corn and beans together combine complementary amino acids to form protein. This nutritional advance had the power to move people beyond subsistence into a more secure footing in their environment. The traditional reverence for these foods reflects their importance to the survival of the Native Peoples.

In the second session Heather Henderson introduced us to French foodways in 17th-century Nova Scotia, as revealed by faunal remains from Fort Anne, Annapolis Royale. The animal bones disposed of in a midden, or kitchen garbage pit, can reveal a good deal about the food that was prepared in the kitchen. Bones from various classes are distinct, and an expert can determine whether the bones are from a mammal, bird, fish, or a reptile. The presence of immature or uncalcified bones can point to the age of the animal at the time of consumption, and therefore the season of slaughter, if the life-cycle of the animal is known. Patterns of butchery may be indicated by cuts to the surviving bones

All these factors were considered in analysing the remains from this site to try to discover ethnic food preferences, as well as the availability of certain kinds of animals for food. The remains from this dig indicated that the French families at Annapolis Royale in the 1630s regularly consumed imported domestic cows and pigs, and only occasionally ate more exotic local fare. Despite their proximity to water, fish was rarely consumed.

Other archaeological evidence points to the use of pewter, tin-plated dishes, china, and green-glazed earthenware, all imported from Europe. The picture that emerges from the evidence at this site is of the French inhabitants trying to recreate their familiar ways of life on foreign soil. They introduced animal species they were familiar with, and butchered and cooked them in their customary way, to eat them off imported dishes.

In the third session Dena Doroszenko told the story of Inge Va. The biographical information and the archaeological evidence are both important to understanding this heritage property in Perth, Ontario. Lucy and Thomas Radenhurst married in 1834 and settled into Inge Va to raise a family. This was a family of quality and quantity. They had ten children by 1846, and expanded their home in the 1840s.

A series of archaeological digs unearthed fragments of 54 named china patterns. The large collection shows the availability of a great variety of quality ceramics in Ontario in the mid-19th century. The earliest set of china was likely the most expensive, and might represent their wedding china. This set was manufactured in Japan and hand-painted with gilt paint. The named patterns from the digs include Dresden Spring, Castle, Mandarin, Blue Willow, Persia, and White Wheat. Types of ceramics include blue edgeware, banded wares, mocha ware, yellow ware, and red earthenware.

Identifiable objects include everything from chamberpots to children's plates and mugs. These latter objects are the most poignant in this massive collection. Three children in the household died between 1866 and 1873 and tuberculosis was diagnosed as the cause. The archaeological remains reveal a domestic tragedy, as it seems that the family threw their dishes in the pit and buried them to stop the spread of this dreaded disease.

These three sessions gave participants an excellent cross section of the kinds of information that archaeologists can discover. We were taken from basic nutrition, through preservation of cultural identity, to human tragedy in one morning.

Family Fare

Edited by Ed Lyons

I'm sure everyone reading this newsletter has heard of Canada's Kate Aitken. Janis Ackroyd of Whitecap Books, the publisher of the recent reprint of Kate's 1945 cookbook, asked Kate's son-in-law, Bob Hortop, for some of the family's favourite recipes. He responded: Chicken Pot Pie, Butter Tarts, Rich Plum Pudding, and Date and Nut Loaf. All of these recipes are in the 1945 first edition.

Here's Kate's recipe for Chicken Pot Pie, as presented in the 1964 Collins edition, where the author offers the alternative of using commercial tea biscuit topping in place of the homemade 'batter' of the first edition.

Chicken Pot Pie

Temperature: 425°F. Time: 20 minutes.

- 1 boiling fowl, 5-6 lbs (butcher's weight)
- 1 onion
- 1 whole clove
- 2 teaspoons salt
- Dash of pepper and mace
- Hot water
- 1 1/2 tablespoons chicken fat
- 1 1/2 tablespoons flour
- Dash of paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups milk
- 1 cup chicken stock

Cut chicken in pieces; place in kettle with onion stuck with clove. Add seasonings; add hot water to cover. Simmer gently until tender; remove fat; strain stock. Remove meat from bones. Blend chicken fat and flour together; add paprika and salt. Let bubble 3 minutes; add milk; cook and stir till smooth; add 1 cup chicken stock. Combine with chicken; place in 2-quart oiled casserole. Cover with tea biscuit topping. Bake in hot oven. Serves 6.

Note to Dumpling Lovers: Dumplings may be substituted for topping. Mix homemade or ready mix

Tea Biscuit batter with sufficient moisture that batter drops from tip of spoon. Cover chicken mixture with dumplings; cover tightly; bake as above.

Please send your favourite family recipes and some family history to Ed at lyons@idirect.com or by snail mail to 9 Buller Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4L 1B9.

Awards

The Women's Culinary Network has named CHO member Dorothy Duncan their Woman of the Year and will present the award to Dorothy at a celebration at Montgomery's Inn in Toronto on 27 June. Congratulations Dorothy!

Fiona's Musings: Happy Birthday CHO!

Ten years ago a little idea blossomed into a wonderful organization. Meeting in Christine's living room in Kitchener, we - Christine Ritsma, Bridget Wranich, and I, Fiona Lucas - planned a grassroots group that would explore Ontario's foodways. We named it the Culinary Historians of Ontario. Today, many symposia, many food events, and many newsletters later, it is possible to simultaneously look back and look forward at an organization that has become important to Ontarians who find our culinary heritage a fascinating and absorbing area of study. Membership in CHO even shows up on resumes, and our newsletter will be exhibited in the upcoming cookbook exhibition, *Bon Appétit*, at Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa!

Looking back, I see our first event in autumn 1996 and most ambitious so far, the symposium 'From Rations to Riesling: Remembering Ontario's Food History,' co-sponsored by Doon Heritage Crossroads in Kitchener. Over the years, other groups co-sponsored events with us, such as Schneider Haus in Kitchener, Gibson House in Toronto, and the Ontario Historical Society. Scholars, curators, archaeologists, chefs, and restoration experts, all offered their latest research

to receptive audiences. Our newsletters were ongoing sources of news, advice, questions and answers, opinions, and historical research, and together form an important body of enduring information. Most recently, we developed a Constitution, created a Board, and started a website, which I feel are important steps in CHO's development.

Looking forward, I see partnerships with other groups and museums, scholars and students, and experts of related fields, who will generate new research, new expertise, and new members. Our newsletters will continue to be a place where queries are posed, answers found, opinions offered, and inspiration forged. We will build the website

into a significant source of knowledge about Ontario's food history for regional, provincial, and international audiences. Through all this activity, CHO will continue to meet its mandate of researching, interpreting, preserving, and celebrating Ontario's culinary heritage.

Occasionally, there has been dissension and sometimes sad personal events, but CHO has survived and thrived. I have loved my participation in CHO and anticipate at least another ten years of involvement. I thank the core group of long-time committed members, and I thank Christine and Bridget for their camaraderie, laughter, dynamism, and shared interest in CHO and culinary history. Happy Birthday, CHO!

Culinary Calendar

Please send CHO information about upcoming food-history or related events. Events hosted by CHO are represented in the calendar by ***

May 2004

'Mrs. A.'

Montgomery's Inn, Toronto

4709 Dundas St West, (416) 394-6025 or montinn@toronto.ca

Sat, May 1-Sun, June 6: Monday-Friday, 9:30 am-4:30 pm; Saturday & Sunday, 1-5:00 pm

Exhibition of photographs inspired by Kate Aitken, by artist Sue Pye, part of CONTACT Photography Festival. Also, display of Aitken family pictures and memorabilia, and early editions of *Kate Aitken's Canadian Cook Book*.

Kate Aitken Special Tea

Montgomery's Inn, Toronto

4709 Dundas St West, (416) 394-6025 or montinn@toronto.ca

Sun, May 2, two sittings: 1-2:30 pm, 3-4:30 pm

Butter tarts, cherry pound cake, & dainty sandwiches, from Aitken's cookbook. \$6. Pre-registration required.

March-June, 2-4:30 pm

Aitken treats served for regular afternoon tea. \$4.

19th-Century Desserts Workshop

Gibson House Museum, Toronto

5172 Yonge St, (416) 395-7432 or gibsonhouse@toronto.ca

Sat, May 8, 10 am-2 pm

Participants prepare and sample a delightful selection of desserts from 19th-century sources. \$25 incl GST and course materials. Pre-registration required.

Fort York Fund-Raising Dinner

Historic Fort York, Toronto

100 Garrison Rd, (416) 392-6907 or mgarris@toronto.ca

Thurs, May 13, evening

Georgian banquet. \$175 per person. Pre-registration required.

Bon Appétit! A Celebration of Canadian Cookbooks

Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa

395 Wellington St, (613) 995-9481, toll free: 1 (877) 896-9481

Wed, May 19-Dec 31

Exhibition of Canadian cookbooks, curated by CHO member Carol Martin, reveals changing attitudes to food and cooking, from Native experience through pioneer times and multicultural immigration, to today's flavours and ideas. Work of CHO recognized by inclusion of one of its newsletters. Free.

June 2004

***Orange Juice: Invention - Production - Imitation

Northern District Library, Toronto

40 Orchard View Blvd, (416) 393-7610

Wed, June 2, 7 pm

Pierre Laszlo, Prof of Chemistry, École polytechnique de Paris & Université de Liège, Belgium. First in series on beverages. Orange juice as drink, commodity, chemical formulation & cultural artifact. CHO members \$8 / non-members \$10. Info: Eva MacDonald (416) 534-9384.

July 2004

Summer on the Farm

Gibson House Museum, Toronto

5172 Yonge St, (416) 395-7432 or gibsonhouse@toronto.ca

Sundays in July & Aug, noon-5 pm

Each weekend interpreters in the historic kitchen explore preserving techniques: garden produce will be pickled, dried or made into jams; meat & fish will be dried & salted for the winter. General admission.

August 2004

Toronto's Festival of Beer

Historic Fort York, Toronto

100 Garrison Rd, (416) 392-6907 or mgarris@toronto.ca

Thurs, Aug 5-Sun, Aug 8, hours vary

Over 100 types of beer to sample, gourmet fare, cooking demos, lectures on beer history. Tickets from Ticketmaster, or at door. Info: 416 635-9889.

Culinary Calendar (cont'd.)

Flavours of Perth & Settlers' Fare Barbeque

Elma-Logan Arena, Monkton, Hwy 23 & County Road 25, between Mitchell and Listowel

Organized by Stratford-Perth Museum, 270 Water St, Stratford, (519) 271-5311 or spmuseum@cyg.net

Sat, Aug 14, 10 am-4 pm; BBQ, 5 pm

Celebration of Perth County's rich agricultural heritage; food tastings, demonstrations, entertainments & crafts. \$5.00 adults, \$2.00 children. For BBQ, steam engine cooks the corn! BBQ tickets available in advance: \$10 adults, \$6.00 children under 12.

September 2004

***CHO Annual General Meeting

Location, date, and time to be announced

Northern Bounty VI Conference

Kelowna, British Columbia

Hosted by Cuisine Canada. Info: www.cuisinecanada.ca or Sandra Kochan, (250) 860-1988 or kochan@shaw.ca

Sept 23-26

Showcase of regional specialties and culinary personalities, hosted by Cuisine Canada, plus announcement of National Culinary Book Awards.

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 food and beverages, from those of the First Nations to recent immigrants. We research, interpret, preserve, and celebrate Ontario's culinary heritage.

Members:

Enjoy the quarterly newsletter, may attend CHO events at special members' rates, and receive up-to-date information on Ontario food-history happenings. Join a network of people dedicated to Ontario's culinary history.

Membership fee:

\$20 (Cdn) for One-Year Individual and One-Year Household

\$35 (Cdn) for Two-Year Individual and Two-Year Household

Website: www.culinaryhistorians.ca

Email: culinaryhistorians@uoguelph.ca

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

Board: President: Liz Driver; Vice President: Amy Scott; Past President: Fiona Lucas; Secretary: Marguerite Newell; Treasurer: Bob Wildfong; Programme Chair: Eva MacDonald; Newsletter Chair: [open]; Membership Chair: Elizabeth Nelson-Raffaele.

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