# Culinary Chronicles

**The Newsletter of the Culinary Historians of Ontario**

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TOP: These two-handled cups belonged to the King family and were recently donated by a descendent. What kind of cups are they?

RIGHT: At the end of the 19th century, patents for this type of invention were popular. What kind of invention was this?

(Top photograph: Robert Roe; bottom photograph: Brian Morin; both courtesy of Woodside National Historic Site, Parks Canada, Kitchener)

## Culinary Whatzits

Introducing a new column!

*These two culinary mysteries are both on display at Woodside, the Kitchener boyhood home of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. What are they?*

Answers in Summer 2006 issue

*If you have a culinary whatzit that you'd like to offer for future issues, please contact the Editor.*

## Contents

# Message from the President

CHO is enjoying a tasty and varied program this year. Delicious memories linger of **Caribou Stew and Bannock** offered at Dr Lynette Hunter's February lecture on changing foods in Panniqtuuq – our first annual lecture in partnership with the Ontario Historical Society. As I write this message, I am anticipating the multi-course **Victorian Banquet to Spring**, featuring dishes made from recipes in Ontario 19th-century cookbooks, complemented by Henry of Pelham wines. This April event, partnered with the Ontario Wine Society, attracted a record number of **96 registered guests!** On May 25, at Montgomery's Inn Museum, we will learn from Dr Pierre Laszlo about the **daily and festival foods and drinks of a French village in 2005**, then on July 1, we will fall back in time at the historic site of Fort York, where CHO members are invited to the **launch of Fiona Lucas's new book *Hearth and Home: Women and the Art of Open Hearth Cooking***, as part of the Canada Day celebrations at the Fort. On August 19, members will gather at Ruthven Park National Historic Site for **Picnic on the Grand,** a summer outing to the Thompsons' Greek Revival mansion near Cayuga that includes a special food-history tour ranging in time from the 1840s hearth to the Edwardian dining-room and funky 1960s turquoise kitchen. The picnic meal is inspired by a 1916 David Thompson letter. This is a public event, in partnership with Ruthven Park, so bring your family and friends along for the fun. On September 28 we will meet for the **Annual General Meeting** at Montgomery's Inn Museum to help set the future for CHO by voting on the proposed amendments to the Constitution; **historic beverages** will be consumed in the 1838 bar room! And on October 21 explore food history in Hamilton at **Dundurn Castle and Whitehern Historic House**.

Other events are in the planning stages, but, to take you full circle to our second annual lecture at the Ontario Historical Society in spring 2007, I am delighted to announce that **Elizabeth Baird** will speak about **Canadian food trends** of the last few decades, as pictured on the covers and in the advertisements of *Canadian Living* magazine. As Food Editor of the magazine since 1987, host of Food Network Canada's television series "Canadian Living Cooks," and author of best-selling books about Canadian cooking, Elizabeth has had an enormous influence in kitchens across the country, from her home base in Toronto. As CHO members have observed at meetings, our interest in the history of food extends from the distant past to yesterday.

**Liz Driver, President, CHO**

# A short way to make old bread new, or better than new.

Bread that is seven days old, may be renewed so as to have all the freshness and lightness of new bread, by simply putting it into a common steamer over the fire, and steaming it half or three quarters of an hour. The vessel under a steamer containing the water, should not be more than half full, otherwise the water may boil up the steamer and wet the bread. After the bread is thus steamed, it should be taken out of the steamer, and wrapped loosely in a cloth to dry and cool, and remain so two or three hours, when it will be ready to be cut and used. It will then be like cold new bread. By this process we may work such a change in *old* bread, as will make it in all respects *new*, except in its deleterious qualities – and thus at the same time gratify the taste, and observe the purposes of health and economy. New bread, it is well known, cannot be eaten with perfect impunity, until it has undergone the process of *ripening* – and indeed physicians say it ought not, as a general rule, be eaten till the day after it is made. A way is pointed out above, by which a taste for new bread may be gratified, without exposure to injury. We have received the above suggestions from an experienced housekeeper, who has often tried the experiment, and to our knowledge, with complete success – and we publish it for the benefit of others.

*British American Journal* (St Catharines), January 15, 1835

(courtesy of Mary Williamson)

# "Community Responses to Changing Foods in Panniqtuuq, Nunavut"

Maggie Newell

*Maggie is CHO's Secretary. She often reports on CHO events for* Culinary Chronicles.

**Dr Lynette Hunter**

(photograph courtesy of Mya Sangster)

On Monday, 13 February, the Ontario Historical Society (OHS) and the Culinary Historians of Ontario (CHO) presented their first joint lecture program. Dr Lynette Hunter from University of California Davis talked about "Community Responses to Changing Foods in Panniqtuuq, Nunavut." By a happy coincidence, this event took place during Aboriginal Awareness week.

Elizabeth Driver on behalf of CHO and Robert Leverty on behalf of the OHS welcomed the audience of twenty-six. Rob briefly recounted the story of the John McKenzie House and how it came to be the home of the OHS. It was built in 1913 in the Arts and Crafts style, and preserved and restored through the efforts of the OHS in exchange for a twenty-five year lease.

Dr Hunter began her talk with a disclaimer, stating that she is not a nutritionist, a dietitian or an expert on the subject of Native foodways. Her research in the community of Panniqtuuq on Baffin Island began with an academic interest in storytelling as a way of maneuvering in social situations. There are, in fact, not many stories about food in this part of the world. However Dr Hunter's experiences in Panniqtuuq revealed how food is involved in a sense of traditional values.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for a "cook" in the usual sense of the word is the almost complete absence of fuel above the tree line. Panniqtuuq is virtually on the Arctic Circle, and there are no trees this far north. Fuel in the form of rendered blubber is burned in a stone vessel called a *qilliq,* but though this vessel is like a hearth, it traditionally was used for light and warmth, not cooking. Food is "prepared," rather than "cooked," in traditional Inuit culture. Nunavut is a cold desert with a short growing season and little top soil to support vegetation. However, the ocean is a rich resource, one that brought Scottish and American whalers to this area from the 1820s to the 1880s. This first contact brought flour, sugar and lard into the local diet. Thus bannock is a "traditional" food dating back to the mid 19th century.

The harbour at Panniqtuuq continued as a gathering place for Native people after the whaling finished in the 1880s and southern influences increased as the community continued to grow. In 1921 a Hudson's Bay Company outpost was established, followed by an RCMP station in 1923, and a hospital and church in 1927. The 1950s brought dramatic changes to the north. Tuberculosis devastated many Native communities, for which the treatment at that time required long-term hospitalization. As there were no treatment facilities in the north families were fragmented when infected individuals spent years in the south, some as many as ten or more years. One can imagine the culture shock on first moving to the south, staying for an extended period, and then returning to the north.

Traditional winter transportation and hunting were

also altered forever when a distemper epidemic killed most of the sled dog population in the late 1950s and 1960s. Snow machines took the place of dogs hauling sleds across the snow. This was not a simple change as dogs can be fed from resources on the land, but gasoline has to be imported and paid for. The immediate effect was to make winter hunting very difficult, so many people gathered in more settled communities like Panniqtuuq.

Today residents of Panniqtuuq and other northern communities have a choice of foods from the north and south. “Country” foods from the land continue to be important, partly as a matter of taste and partly of economy. The consumption of raw food is still very common. Local game includes caribou, ringed seal, beluga whale, arctic hare, polar bear, ptarmigan, arctic char and snow goose. Concerns are expressed about the regular consumption of some animals, such as polar bears, because of the accumulation of toxic chemicals in their flesh as they consume other animals contaminated by the PCBs dropping in the cold air over the Arctic.

Over the centuries the Inuit have developed some inventive means of using what is available. A sort of “Inuit ice-cream” is made by whisking minced blubber with the fingers until it reaches the right consistency. Although this may not sound appetizing to someone raised in the south, this uses the animal fat that is locally available just as our ice-cream uses the animal fat in dairy products.

The lack of greens in the diet seems like an insurmountable problem to someone brought up in the south, but a surprising number of vitamins are present in parts of the animals that make up the traditional Inuit diet. Caribou liver, muktuk, and seal fat and liver provide vitamins A, B, C and D. Polar bear liver has vitamin A at levels that are toxic to humans. Traditionally the stomach contents of a slaughtered caribou were eaten, as well as its flesh. In this way the reindeer moss, arctic moss, liver wort and red mushrooms consumed by the caribou are “cooked” by its digestive juices.

Today southern foods, including fresh vegetables, are available in most northern grocery stores. The limited vegetation in this region has many medicinal uses. Two examples are Arctic willow, used for pain (there is salicylic acid in the bark), and Wintergreen for chest complaints. The Cottontail plant has an oily stem and fluffy flower head. The tops can be used like cotton swabs or dipped in seal oil and used as fire starters.

A Summer Camp is an opportunity for Inuit families to live on the land, hunt game, harvest wild plants, and pass on skills to their children. Dr Hunter was able to observe a family trip that included hunting for ptarmigan eggs and cooking seal stew on the beach. These trips help to stock the larder with dried arctic char and the freezer with caribou. Typically a family returning from a successful hunting trip will share with other members of the community. In particular, people unable to hunt for themselves receive gifts of game for their freezer.

There are some amazing traditional ways of preparing food without using fuel to cook it. “Ageing” is a method of preparing caribou that Dr Hunter compared to the process of making cheese. After removing the innards, the caribou carcass is sewn up and left under a pile of stones for approximately four months. This must be done in the warmer weather in order to age or “cook” the caribou, not freeze it. The torso might be stuffed with whole birds or fish, which melt together with the caribou. Like some kinds of cheese, the aroma is very strong, and it is an acquired taste.

In 1998 the community of Panniqtuuq had the rare opportunity to hunt a bowhead whale, a cause of major celebration because permission to hunt a whale is rarely granted by the Canadian government. Dr Hunter showed images of the celebration and the serving of the traditional delicacy, muktuk. This is not blubber; it is the pink layer of flesh under the white blubber. Using their cannery facilities much of the whale was canned and shipped around the circumpolar region to other communities. Sharing this good fortune was part of the celebration, and an expression of a deep-rooted cultural value.

Starting in the 1970s a local woman named Rosie Veevee went house to house in Panniqtuuq giving cooking classes in southern cooking. The ingredients and technology to eat a southern diet are available, but other obstacles remain. An article

published in *Up Here* magazine in March 2006 estimated that a family of four can pay anywhere from $250 to $350 a week for groceries. In remote communities very few people can afford to eat a healthy southern-style diet exclusively because it is very expensive to eat imported fruits, vegetables and dairy products. The shipping costs for healthy southern food are subsidized by a government-run food mail program, for which individuals and grocery stores can apply. Some consumers can take advantage of sealifts that bring bulk shipments to communities on the Arctic coast during the summer.

Another government-sponsored effort to improve nutrition in the north is the Nunavut Food Guide. Like the Canada Food Guide this publication outlines the recommended daily servings of different food groups. On closer inspection one discovers bannock in the breads group, local berries in the fruits and vegetables group, and seal, caribou and ptarmigan in the meat group. This sensible approach blends local and southern foods.

We finished our evening with delicious samples of caribou stew, bannock prepared three different ways, and a selection of northern teas.

**Caribou Stew made by Lynette Hunter and Liz Driver**

(photo courtesy of Mya Sangster)

**Liz Driver, President of CHO; our guest speaker, Lynette Hunter; Fulvia della Schiava and Irene Herzuk of the Programme Committee, who baked the three types of bannock**

(photo courtesy of Mya Sangster)

## News from the CHO Outreach and Education Committee

Members of the "O and E Committee" will be going to events in various parts of Ontario during the summer and fall, starting with the *International Lighthouse Conference* at the Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre in Southampton on June 1–4. Mya Sangster, Rosemary Kovac and Amy Scott will be staffing an information table and providing the morning snack for Friday's attendees, probably some form of ship's biscuit, as well as something from local Southampton or Bruce County cookbooks. From the Southampton Public Library they have a *YMCA Owen Sound Cook Book*, 1910, and an undated *Good Things and How to Cook Them*, by "Chef."

If you would like the "O and E Committee" to attend your community event, please contact Amy at culinaryhistorians@uoguelph.ca.

# Two Descriptions of Canadian Kitchens

## #1 – UPPER CANADA, circa 1830

**Caniff Haight. *Country Life in Canada Fifty Years Ago: Personal Recollections and Reminiscences of a Sexagenarian.* Toronto: Hunter, Rose and Co., 1885, [reprinted in facsimile by Mika Publishing Co., Belleville, ON, 1986, with an introduction by Arthur R.M. Lower], pp 10–12, 89–90.**

*Canniff Haight was born in the County of Lennox and Addington of Quaker forebears in the late 1820s.*

The house was a frame one, as nearly all the best houses were in those days, and was painted a dark yellow. There were two kitchens, one used for washing and doing the heavier household work in; the other, considerably larger, was used by the family. In the latter was the large fire-place, around which gathered in the winter time bright and happy faces; where the old men smoked their pipes in peaceful reverie, or delighted us with stories of other days; where mother darned her socks, and father mended our boots; where the girls were sewing, and uncles were scraping axe-handles with bits of glass to make them smooth. There were no drones in farm-houses then; there was something for everyone to do. At one side of the fire-place was a large brick oven with its gaping mouth, closed by a small door, easily removed, where the bread and pies were baked. Within the fire-place was an iron crane securely fastened in the jamb, and made to swing in and out with its row of iron pot-hooks of different lengths, on which to hang the pots used in cooking. Cook stoves had not yet appeared to cheer the housewife and revolutionize the kitchen. Joints of meat and poultry were roasted on turning spits, or were suspended before the fire by a cord and wire attached to the ceiling. Cooking was attended with more difficulties then. Meat was fried in long-handled pans, and the short-cake that so often graced the supper table, and played such havoc with the butter and honey, with the pancakes that came piping hot on the breakfast table, owed their finishing touch to the frying pan. The latter, however, were more frequently baked on a large griddle with a bow handle made to hook on the crane. This, on account of its larger surface, enabled the cook to turn out these much-prized cakes, when properly made, with greater speed; and in a large family an expert hand was required to keep up the supply. Some years later an ingenious Yankee invented what was called a “Reflector,” made of bright tin for baking. It was a small tin oven with a slanting top, open at one side, and when required for use was set before the fire on the hearth. This simple contrivance was a great convenience, and came into general use. Modern inventions in the appliances for cooking have very much lessened the labour and increased the possibilities of supplying a variety of dishes, but it has not improved the quality of them. There were no better caterers to hungry stomachs than our mothers, whose practical education had been received in grandmother’s kitchen.

*

The kitchen, which always seemed to me like an after-thought, was a much lower part of the structure, welded on one end or the other of the main body of the house, and usually had a roof projecting some distance over one side, forming a “stoop.” In very many cases, the entrance to the spacious cellar, where the roots, apples, cider, and other needs of the household were kept, was from this through a trap door, so that in summer or winter the good wife had actually to go out of doors when anything was required for the table, and that was very often. It really seemed as though the old saying of “the longest way round is the shortest way home” entered not only into the laying out of highways, but into all the domestic arrangements. Economy of time and space, convenience, or anything to facilitate or lighten labour, does not appear to have occupied the thoughts of the people. Work was the normal condition of their being, and, as we see it now, everything seems to have been so arranged as to preclude the possibility of idle moments.

# #2 – WESTERN CANADA, 1911

**Ella Constance Sykes, *A Home-Help in Canada*, London: G. Bell and Sons, 1912.**

*Ella Sykes (c 1870–1939) was a well-travelled English gentlewoman with an activist's interest in women's working conditions and their rights as employees. She assumed the role of investigative reporter for the Colonial Intelligence League for Educated Women, which wanted firsthand proof that educated English women were being misled by Canadian advertisements for home-helps, a euphemism for servants of all work. She said that her "book [was] the plain, unvarnished record of what I saw during a six months' tour in 1911" during her personal experience as a temporary home-help in five homes in Western Canada. This passage describes one farm kitchen she worked in.*

We had always cakes or scones for tea, and I learnt here the excellent and speedy Canadian method of measuring flour, sugar, butter &c. by the cup, and small quantities by the table- and tea-spoon: I never saw weighing scales throughout my tour, but at first found it difficult to translate the pounds and ounces of my English recipes into "cups" and spoonsful.

On Saturday we had a general clean-up. I washed with soap and water the shabby linoleum that covered the kitchen floor, and the smart dining-room linoleum was cleansed with skim milk, that gave it wonderful polish; the drawing-room, a repository of countless knick-knacks, had to be dusted, and the carpet-cleaner diligently used here and in the bedrooms. The work tired me hardly at all when I got into it, and my chief concern was the fear that my hands would become permanently blackened from the cleaning of dirty saucepans, while the many washing operations made my nails terribly brittle.

The kitchen floor was partly covered with loose pieces of carpet that I was forever displacing at first, arousing my employer's ire and caustic remarks about my "shuffling tread." One length went from the "shed" to the kitchen table, and there was a piece laid down for the feet of each youth, an attention that they much disliked; but I suppose it was easier to shake the mud of bits of carpet than to remove it from the linoleum. The pots and pans were kept in the "shed," and here it was that I scraped out the porridge saucepan every morning, a tiresome task anyhow; and as it had two holes that were stopped up with scraps of calico, it behove me to be careful not to pull these out during my cleansing operations. [Editor: I cannot picture this!]

The kitchen table was covered with white oilcloth, and on it Mrs Robinson mixed her dough for bread and pastry, without the aid of a board; but for meals we had a tablecloth, that the boys speedily soiled, owing to the uncivilised way in which they ate their food, and I should have infinitely preferred the oilcloth unadorned.

I had a hot position with my back to the stove, in which there was one large oven in the middle, and on the right a boiler that it was my task to keep filled from the rain-water tank at the back-door. Above the stove was a receptacle in which plates and dishes could be kept hot, and on either side hung a collection of pots and pans. The big block-tin kettle* was king of the kitchen and it behove me to be careful of it, as when on the boil the steam from its spout was capable of inflicting a bad burn, as I discovered to my cost.

During the days of rain it was most difficult to keep the fire alight with the damp wood, and we had recourse to drying the logs in the oven; and when the weather suddenly got hot, the kitchen was a veritable black hole of Calcutta, and the hateful house-fly and mosquito began to annoy.

Sometimes I used to wonder whether it were indeed I who was cleaning out rooms on my hands and knees, or rubbing clothes on the washing-board, or ironing, or replenishing that voracious stove with pieces of wood. I must confess that though I gave my whole mind to my work, yet I found the life very monotonous, and it was hard at first to be ordered about, and not to be mistress of my own time.

[* "Block-tin is pure, refined tin cast into molds." Mary Earle Gould, *Antique Tin and Tole Ware, Its History and Romance*, 1958, p 4.]

# Profile of a Kitchen Utensil: THE ROLLING PIN

Amy Scott

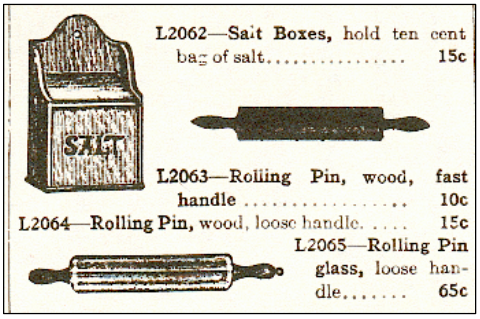
*As well as being CHO's Vice President, Amy is a Volunteer Historic Cook at Mackenzie House Museum in Toronto, which represents the early 1860s.*

When I was asked to write a little article on a kitchen article, I chose an item that no self-respecting cook would be without. Not a gadget-y, over-patented, trendy piece like the apple-peeler, but something with a long history of quiet and constant service. After some consideration, I decided on the rolling pin. Perversely, of course, I found it a difficult item to trace historically. My personal library of books on food history didn't produce much hard data, and a trawl of handy library sources didn't turn up much chronology.

I think that part of the reason for this lies in the deceptive simplicity of the rolling pin. In a pinch, pastry can be rolled out with any long, relatively narrow and cylindrical object with a smooth surface: the rolling action determines its obvious cylindrical form. Rolling pins are grouped in two styles: the American, manipulated by stationary or revolving handles, and the straight or tapered handle-less French.

Many professional chefs today prefer a French pin, because it gives a good 'feel' for the pastry. The heavier the weight, the lighter the baker's touch, and the airier the pastry since the air is not crushed out, resulting in a better short crust, puff pastry, phyllo, strudel, or dough for cookies, biscuits, gingerbreads or noodles. Paper thin doughs like phyllo and strudel are best rolled with a perfectly smooth straight cylinder. Tapered rolling pins, on the other hand, are better at pushing the dough out from the centre, as in croissant, pies and chapattis. Some cookery authors, such as Eliza Leslie, advised always to roll in one direction, away from oneself, although others were noncommittal on this point.

Many of the extant rolling pins from the 19th century and earlier have handles, either the hand-width type common today, or stubby knob ones. My fellow Volunteer Historic Cook at Mackenzie House, Eva MacDonald, and I once had a visitor stump us with a question about handles on rolling pins. Eva was rolling out some (excellent!) puff




**Rolling pins from Hudson's Bay catalogue of Autumn and Winter 1911**

(facsimile reprint from Watson and Dwyer Publishing, Winnipeg, 1977, p 85)

paste, using a rolling pin with handles attached to an axle rod running through the centre of the pin. Our visitor thought that this type of pin didn't come into use until a later period. I haven't been able to nail it down, but the examples I've seen in books do suggest that the familiar revolving handle was a turn-of-the-century development. The earliest dated one I found was 1881, in the Simmons Hardware Co. catalogue of St Louis, Missouri. The 1910–1911 Autumn and Winter Hudson's Bay catalogue, out of Winnipeg, has on page 181 the choice of a "Rolling Pin, wood, fast handle" for 10¢ or a "Rolling Pin, wood, loose handle" for 15¢, or a "Rolling Pin, glass, loose handle" for an amazing 65¢. Some handles were plain, while others were beautifully turned.

The earliest ones were probably wood, and this is still the most popular material. A heavy, densely grained wood such as maple is best. Other popular materials were glass and ceramics. Even ivory was used. One of the explanations for the prevalence of ship motifs in the decoration of early glass pins is that they were given as love tokens by sailors embarking on long voyages. Glass rolling pins were generally hollow, with a stoppered opening at one end. In some cases they doubled as salt-boxes and were hung near the fire

to keep it dry. Because they were hollow, glass and some ceramic pins would be filled with cold water to help keep delicate pastry cool as it was being rolled out. In the early 20th century, a lot of glass pins had screw caps at one end to facilitate this. The above-mentioned Hudson's Bay one clearly shows a little knob on one handle. However, I gather that condensation on the outer surface can be a problem. Some of the later ceramic pins had advertisements for flour and other foodstuffs on them, not necessarily associated with a rolling pin. The Harry Horne Company in Toronto, still in business (and best known for custard powder) had one in the 1930s that advertised the radio program of evening music it sponsored. It is decorated in black and white inks, while some rolling pins were meant to be solely decorative, like scrimshaw.

The Victorians, of course, were unable to leave a piece of kitchen equipment unimproved. A number of different quirks were patented during the 19th century, such as double rollers, frame handles, and a compartment of flour that allowed the rolling pin to flour itself as it rolled. Paired with a potato masher, wooden rolling pins were a traditional wedding gift. One clever 19th-century carver in New York City, John Conger, carved wooden rolling pins as companions to his wooden cake and cookie moulds. Implements similar in design include corrugated rollers for crushing oatmeal, and carved rollers for marking biscuits, a bit like springerle boards. Rolling pins can also be turned to other kitchen tasks, such as crushing breadcrumbs, flattening wiener schnitzel and tenderising meat.

**Reproduction double-cylinder rolling pin made in the Shaker style by an artisan at Hancock Shaker Village, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, summer 2002**

(photograph courtesy of Peter Myers)

In a discussion about rolling pins, Sandy Oliver in the March 1990 issue of *Food History News* thought "it would be very interesting to see, for example, all wooden pins from various regions at one period in time, so that the regional differences if any could be clearly observed; or see pins of one material from one region over time so evolving design could be observed."

I plan to keep my eyes open for more detailed information on the history of the humble rolling pin. If you know more or have some good sources, write in and contribute!

*If you have information to share with Amy, please email culinaryhistorians@uoguelph.ca.*


**Simmons Hardware Company, St Louis, MI, 1881** (facsimile reprint in *Victorian Houseware, Hardware and Kitchenware*, Minneola, NY: Dover Publications, 1992, p 85)

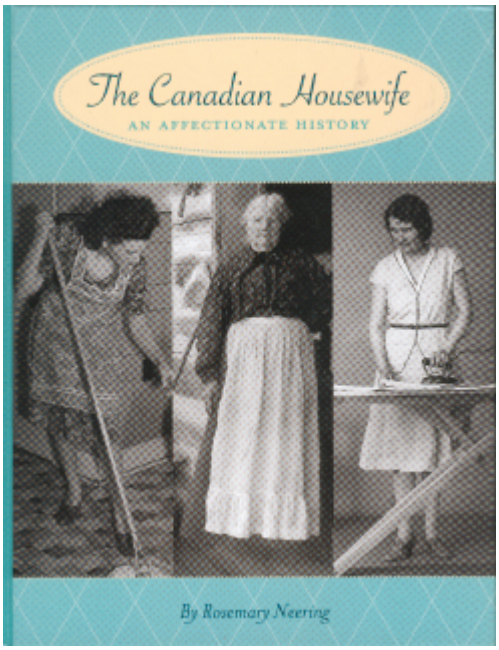
# Dean Tudor's Book Review

*CHO member Dean Tudor is Journalism Professor Emeritus at Ryerson University; his wine and food reviews can be accessed at www.deantudor.com.*

**Rosemary Neering, *The Canadian Housewife: an affectionate history.* Vancouver: Whitecap, 2005. 256 pp, ISBN 1-55285-717-4, $29.95.**

Neering is the author of several books on Canadian travel and history which deal with pioneers and women. One of her books for Whitecap was *Wild West Women: travelers, adventurers, and rebels.* She's nicely qualified to attempt a popular history of the Canadian "housewife," although her style and tone wavers between "affectionate" and "amusing."

The time frame is from Acadia (although the first "official" housewife was Marie Rollet, wife of apothecary Louis Hebert, who arrived at Quebec in 1617) through to the cusp of the 1950s/1960s when "housewife" started to be a derogatory term, then became a negative stereotype. Certainly, for many years it was recorded on the Census as "No Occupation." But then, women (as late as the 1920s) were not even considered "persons." Yet "housewife" was once a proud occupation, beginning with farming and keeping the family together. Most women were younger than their husbands, and thus with age, war and pestilence, many became widows and were the sole glue of the family unit.




Neering stays clear of status issues, concentrating on the anecdotal and archival history of a wife's principal activities. Her book is divided into time chapters, from Acadia and New France, through Upper and Lower Canada, the later Victorian period and the domestic science/home economics period, settling the Prairies, WWI, the 1920s, the Dirty Thirties, WWII, and the post-war period. Each chapter is divided into the categories of cooking, sewing, cleaning and housekeeping, laundry, and the mother, nurse and wife. She scatters quotes, recipes, historical illustrations (photos and line drawings), household hints, advertisements, excerpts from published and unpublished diaries, and books, magazines, and journals too, in a variety of sidebars and glosses on almost every page.

For food, she has 44 recipes, such as duck casserole, beignets, goose pie, orange jelly, vinegar pie, and toastaroons, all conveniently indexed under the key word "recipe." Unfortunately, in small type on the verso where many readers might not find it, there is the caveat: "Please note that the recipes in this book are unedited, from historical sources, and not tested or recommended. Some ingredients and materials may not be safe for modern use." You have been warned – please, no law suits.

The "housewife" in earlier days had more work to do on food and cooking. It was a rural economy, and all women were expected to help in harvesting and putting food by. Dishes prepared over the fireplace tended to be stews and one-pots. Later, with purchasing power, women could buy goods, and with much purchasing power in the post-war period, women could buy convenience foods. Labour saving devices discouraged much attention to detail in cooking. Some early "housewife" rumblings in the 1950s included protests against food prices and white margarine.

The book has a fair bit of leading and white space, good for design purposes, but this precludes the addition of more material, which I am sure Neering had available to her. Her book concludes with a timeline of events, both political and social, plus end notes and a bibliography of books, periodicals, archives (mainly Glenbow and Library and Archives Canada), and web pages. And of course, the index.

# Two More New Culinary History Books

**Kathryn Hughes. *The Short Life and Long Times of Mrs Beeton.* London: Fourth Estate, 2005. 525 pp, ISBN 1-84115-373-7, $40.95.**

This is a fascinating read, even if you aren't into historical cooking. Hughes has a PhD in 19th-century history and lectures in Biographical Studies at the University of East Anglia. Previous books were *The Victorian Governess* and *George Eliot, The Last Victorian.* My daughter arranged to have this book sent from England before it was available in Canada because she knows that I use Mrs Beeton's recipes at Spadina Museum.

The author chronicles the life of Isabella Mary Beeton (née Mayson), who was born into an upwardly mobile lower-class family in 1836 in London's east end. But she does more than lay out the bare bones of 'Bella's' short life. Her research extends to her forbears and her husband, Samuel Orchart Beeton, also from a family on the make. She details the social changes of this period as England evolved from a rural, agricultural society to an urban, industrialized society. The book often reads like a novel when covering Sam and Isabella's love affair and their problems with their families. And it speculates on the probable cause of her death. Hughes also looks into the numerous books supposedly 'written by Mrs Beeton,' and the many 20th-century books and magazine and newspaper articles published about her. She comments quite caustically about some of them.

I found this a fascinating read and was not dismayed to find that Mrs Beeton was an inveterate plagiarist who took material from her predecessors and categorized it for the ordinary middle classes. Were you aware that she was an arbiter of dress fashion? I certainly had no idea. She was a dynamo journalist. I liked that there is no indication of footnotes on individual pages, but 50 pages of endnotes, as well as 50 pages of primary and secondary sources. One thing annoyed me about this edition. The inside covers show the two family trees, but the printing is too faint for easy reference, which is a shame, since I seemed to go to them regularly during the first part of the book.

**Ed Lyons, Volunteer Historic Cook, Spadina**

**Marilyn Powell. *Cool, the Story of Ice Cream*. Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2005. 250 pp. ISBN 0-14305528-6, $24.00.**

In a style poetic and at times verging on stream-of-consciousness, Powell relays her very personal take on ice cream – clearly a topic she loves – in an imaginative trip through the history and romance of ice cream. She travels some of the same route Elizabeth David did in her stupendous *Harvest of the Cold Months: the Social History of Ice and Ices* (1994), although more sensuously. Powell appeals to the historian's intellect, yes, but she's really seeking to understand the deeply sensual relationship we humans have with the voluptuously cold creaminess of delicious ice cream.

Powell's text is derived from a 2001 episode of CBC Radio's *Ideas*. She organizes it by themes instead of the traditional chronology, looking for patterns of meaning in our ancient quest for flavoured ice, sherbet and sorbet, kulfi and cream. By blending anecdotes, primary research, unusual facts and records, she involves us in a subjective story that is also cultural history. Happily, lots of it is Canadian. Immodestly, I can tell you that she quotes me in my former capacity as Program Officer for Foodways at Spadina Museum, where the original 1909 refrigerator (ice box) is still in situ in its own specially built room.

Powell has a knack for catchy phrasing; here are two of my favourite sentences: "Old recipes are like footprints in the snow: they indicate many paths taken and sometimes rejected (25)." "At the very least, the presence of ice cream in your life makes you happy (xxi)." Ice cream made my parents happy. They ate vast quantities of it all year long, so for me, a dish of good vanilla ice cream embodies the memory of them sitting companionably at the dining table. My 80-year-old mother still enjoys a bowl regularly after dinner.

This is one of those books that left me impressed at how clever and imaginative human ingenuity is. *Cool* is up for a Cuisine Canada Culinary Book Award in the Special Interest Category.

**Fiona Lucas, Editor, *Culinary Chronicles***

# Ruthven's Manuscript Cookbooks

By Amy Scott

*Amy Scott is CHO's Vice President and Chair of the Outreach and Education Committee.*

I went to **Ruthven Park National Historic Site** on a sunny Saturday morning in June 2004 with several other members of the Board and Program Committee of the Culinary Historians of Ontario to discuss the possibilities of a joint event with Chief Administrative Officer Marilynn Havelka. When Marilynn mentioned that she remembered seeing one or two cookbooks among the Thompson family papers, we were all interested. I soon found time to return to Ruthven to see what these cookbooks had to tell, and found myself enthralled.

There are two manuscript (handwritten) recipe collections in the Ruthven archives. One is fairly short, written in a school exercise book by Margaret (Gretchen) Thompson, probably in the late 1910s during her attendance at MacDonald College in Quebec. She was enrolled in a Home Economics program, but it appears that this conventional education for a well-to-do young woman did not appeal to her. Her course notebooks, some of which are in the archives, tend to run out after a few weeks of desultory note-taking. Her cookery book is just as brief. Or, perhaps it was the disruptions of World War I that drew her away from her studies. Later she joined her parents in Britain, where her father, Colonel Andrew Thompson, was stationed.

The other cookbook is altogether less robust, but I found it considerably more interesting. As with many homemade recipe collections, this one was in a little book salvaged from another use – a book that had been discarded by someone else or from some other purpose. It shows signs of originally being a laundry book (for keeping track of clothes sent out to be laundered). The woman who transformed it into a "Cookery and Receipt-book" was Jennie Stovin, and she began her manuscript in March 1858.

An Englishman named Cornelius Stovin settled in St Catharines with his family during the mid 19th century. His wife was named Jane, and it is likely that Jennie was their eldest daughter and her namesake (Jennie was a common diminutive for the name Jane). I have had difficulty tracing Jennie any further; I believe she may have married and therefore changed her surname. But I have found information on several of her sisters. The most important to the Ruthven story was Edith Stovin, who married physician James Hepburn Burns and settled in Toronto. James and Edith Burns were the parents of Violet Isobel Burns, who married Andrew Thompson of Ruthven in 1893.

Violet paid many visits to her Toronto family, and when Andrew was unable to accompany her, she wrote descriptions of her visits to him. In one 1895 letter, she mentions seeing her aunt, which may mean that Jennie ordinarily lived in Toronto. She wrote: "Aunt Jennie is here and is talking so I am writing under difficulties; please excuse mistakes." Whether this was just a comment on the difficulty of doing two things at the same time (writing and listening) or meant that Aunt Jennie was loquacious and therefore distracting, is left to our imaginations! She is almost certainly the Aunt Jennie whose gift is #6 on Violet's elaborate ornamental list of wedding presents. Aunt Jennie gave a "set of carvers with oxidized handles and an oak chest," the former obviously intended for the dinner table.

Probably sometime after her marriage, then, Violet came to own Jennie's little cookery book. Perhaps it was left to her on her aunt's death; perhaps it was a more informal wedding present, to help her set up housekeeping. The recipes in the first ten pages are all in the same handwriting, and many of them seem to be in the same ink. Jennie may have started her book by copying in recipes she had previously collected on loose paper, or perhaps she wrote in her favourite recipes from her mother's cookbooks. After that, she probably took it with her when visiting, so that she could copy in any interesting dishes she tasted, because several other "hands" start to show up. It was not uncommon to ask a lady friend to write her prize recipe into your personal collection, so this is what probably occurred from

time to time. Indeed, many of the recipes are attributed to specific individuals, with some names (and some recipes!) appearing more than once. These ladies may have been close neighbours or friends of the Stovin family. Interspersed among the culinary instructions are recipes of a different kind; for example, "Salad dressing" comes between "Spring Tonic," "Cleansing Switches," and "To darken hair." Household receipts could range from home remedies for common ailments, instructions on making cosmetics, or how to properly clean certain types of clothes or household items.

This little book was certainly much used during its lifetime, because when I first opened it, it was virtually falling apart. (It is now safely tucked in an archival storage box.) Every page is filled – if not with handwritten recipes, then with news-paper clippings pasted in. In addition, someone using the book later in its history penciled in notations, sometimes to attribute a recipe to an individual (e.g. "Doug's Grandmother"), clarify an instruction, or more commonly, to indicate "good" or "very good." So it appears that this was a cookery collection that saw considerable use, across several generations of the family.

Many of the culinary recipes are for baked goods or fancy desserts, but there are also beverages, pickles and preserves. Several recipes from this little cookbook will be used for the lunch at "Picnic on the Grand: Exploring Food History at Ruthven Park," the August 19th event co-sponsored by the Culinary Historians of Ontario and Ruthven Park. The printed menu given to each registrant will provide more information on the recipes.

***Ruthven Park**, a National Historic Site, was the Thompson family's home from the 1840s until 1993. Originally a country estate and working farm, the property now consists of 1,500 acres overlooking the banks of the Grand River, today a Canadian Heritage River. The mansion is open to the public at scheduled hours and for pre-booked groups and special events. The Park is open during the day. The site offers something for everyone, including those with an interest in history and heritage buildings, nature, scenic beauty, wildflowers, hiking, or just relaxing and enjoying peaceful surroundings. See* www.ruthvenpark.ca.

## "Picnic on the Grand: Exploring Food History at Ruthven Park"

**Saturday, August 19, 2006**

**Ruthven National Historic Park in partnership with the Culinary Historians of Ontario**

Spend a day at Ruthven Park exploring the historic house with its magnificent original furnishings and eating a delicious picnic based on a 1916 letter from Andrew Thompson from "Somewhere in Quebec" to "My very dear wife": *"Wyn's magnificent hamper did much to restore us. That sounds as if our grief was not very deep, but you must remember we had a mighty slight early lunch at Borden, and I tell you an empty stomach means low spirits if there be the slightest excuse for them. Such delicious eaties. Cold chicken galore. A jar of aunt Mary's famous green sauce (the Ruthven variety). A magnificent cake. Delicious buns, and luscious grapes."*

The specially designed house tours will feature mini-presentations by CHO's Liz Driver, Rosemary Kovac and Fiona Lucas, and Ruthven's dedicated volunteers. Stops will include the 1845 open hearth **Basement Kitchen**; the late Victorian **Dining Room**, where Aunt Jennie's 1858 manuscript cookbook and Violet's 1893 Wedding Gifts list will be on show; the **1960s kitchen**, where 1967 cookbooks will be used to interpret culinary trends; and the **Barracks** to hear Thompson family letters from WWI concerning food. In the **Kitchen Garden and Orchard**, Landscape Architect Wendy Shearer will talk about the produce grown for the Thompsons' table. **The Picnic** will be served from the **Coach House**, from 12:00 to 1:30 pm. You can register now by contacting Ruthven at 905 772-0560 or ruthven.park@sympatico.ca.

# Culinary Calendar and Upcoming CHO Events

## May 2006

**FOODS OF A FRENCH VILLAGE**
**An illustrated talk by Dr Pierre Laszlo**
**Thursday, May 25, 7:00 pm**
*Montgomery's Inn Museum*
4709 Dundas St W, Toronto
416 394-8113, montinn@toronto.ca

We welcome Pierre Laszlo back to Toronto. He will talk on the fascinating foods and feasts of Sénergues, France, his home base for the last dozen years – the essential stockfish (cod) and such regional and ritual specialties as *confit de canard, farçous, rissoles aux pruneaux, aligot geant* and *saucisse-aligot-vin de Marcillac*. Also, the dietary rules for school children.

$10 CHO members; $12 non-members. Includes light refreshments. All welcome. 416 534-1405 for more information.

## July 2006

Book Launch
**HEARTH AND HOME: WOMEN AND THE ART OF OPEN HEARTH COOKING**
**By Fiona Lucas**
**Canada Day, Saturday, July 1, 10 am–4 pm**
*Historic Fort York*
100 Garrison Rd (off Fleet St, east of Strachan Ave, west of Bathurst St), Toronto
416 392-6907, Event Hotline: 416 338-3888
www.lorimer.ca

Illustrated social history book written by CHO co-founder Fiona Lucas. Activities in 1826 kitchen. All welcome. 416 534-1405 for more information.

Included with regular admission: $6 adults, $3.25 seniors, $3.25 youths, $3 children 12 and under.

## August 2006

**PICNIC ON THE GRAND: EXPLORING FOOD HISTORY**
**Saturday, August 19, 10:00 am–4:00 pm**
*Ruthven Park National Historic Site*
243 Haldimand Hwy. #54, Cayuga
905 772-0560, ruthven.park@sympatico.ca
www.ruthvenpark.ca

Enjoy a summer day at Ruthven Park, exploring more than a century of food history, from the 1840s to the 1960s. This special event includes tours of the magnificent house with an emphasis on food and kitchen history: the house has both an original hearth and bake oven, and a funky turquoise kitchen from the 1960s. That's history now too! Rain or shine!

$16 and $10 children for members of CHO and the Members of the Land Trust. Open to the general public at $20 adults and $10 children. Pre-register by calling or emailing Ruthven.

## September 2006

**CHO's 2006 AGM**
**Thursday, September 28, 7–8:30 pm**
*Montgomery's Inn Museum*, in the tavern
4709 Dundas St W, Toronto
416 394-8113, montinn@toronto.ca

Gather round the hearth in the historic tavern and enjoy an evening of conviviality and historic refreshments (to help the "business" go down!). All members welcome.

**HEARTH COOKING WORKSHOP**
**with Fiona Lucas**
**Saturday, September 30**, **11 am–4 pm**
*Hutchison House Museum*
270 Brock Street, Peterborough
705 743-9710
More information in Summer issue.

## October 2006

**EXPLORING FOOD HISTORY IN HAMILTON**
A day-long event that includes a cooking workshop at Dundurn Castle, followed by a special tour of Whitehern Historic House. Limited to 15 participants. Registration in the workshop guarantees a place in the Whitehern tour. Total cost for the day is $44.

*continued*

*Continued*

**Recipes from Below Stairs, a Historic Cooking Workshop**
**Saturday, October 21, 9 am–noon**
*Dundurn National Historic Site*
610 York Blvd, Hamilton
905 546-2872, dundurn@hamilton.ca

In Dundurn Castle's mid-19th-century kitchen, participants will prepare some fare served to Sir Allan MacNab's servants, then enjoy their meal in the servants' hall. Workshop includes a tour of the Castle and a recipe booklet to take home.

$40 per person. Pre-register ASAP by contacting Dundurn Castle.

**Whitehern Historic House and Garden Tour**
**Saturday, October 21, 1–2:30 pm**
*Whitehern Historic House and Garden*
41 Jackson St West, Hamilton
905 546-2018, www.whitehern.ca

This urban estate belonged to three generations of the McQuesten family. Highlights for culinary historians are the 1930s kitchen and servants' quarters (bedroom and sitting room), and a special viewing of a video featuring the McQuesten's cook Anne Vallesi, whose memories of the kitchen helped guide its recent restoration.

$4 per person. Registration in Dundurn workshop confirms place in tour. Pay on the day.

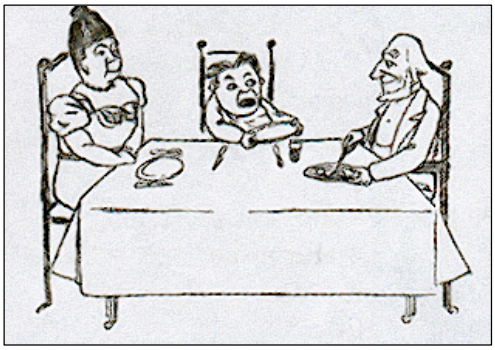


Table scene from *Cautionary Tales for Children* by H. Belloc, illustrated by Basil Temple Blackwood, 1908.

(illustration courtesy of The Osborne Collection)

## 2008 ALHFAM AGM

***CHO seeks ideas***

The June 2008 annual conference of the **Association of Living History Farms and Agricultural Museums** will be held in Ontario, at Upper Canada Village in Morrisburg and the Central Agricultural Museum in Ottawa.

CHO wants to have a strong presence at this conference because it will be a fabulous opportunity to showcase ourselves through presentations, cooking classes, hosting out-of-towners, and any number of other ways. But first we would like to convene a committee. If you are interested in participating on this committee, we would like to hear from you. A meeting will be arranged for the spring. If you live outside of Toronto, please consider joining since much discussion and arrangements can be done by phone and email. Please contact culinaryhistorians@uoguelph.ca to indicate your interest in the ALHFAM 2008 committee.

*ALSO OF INTEREST TO CHO MEMBERS:*

**BREAKFAST, DINNER, LUNCH AND TEA**
*Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books*
Lillian Smith Library, southeast corner of College St and Spadina Ave
**June 12–September 12**

Children's books abound in stories about food, from Oliver Twist's brave request, "Please Sir, I want some more," to the enthusiastic, non-stop munching of the Swallows and Amazons in Arthur Ransome's classic series. Come and see Mole and Toad at their picnic, the sinister Gingerbread House, and that revolt of the unappreciated greens, The Vege-men's Revenge, in an exhibit of children's literary meals.

Mon to Fri, 10 am–6 pm: Sat, 9 am–5 pm, closed Sundays and holidays. Admission is free.

**SECOND BIENNIAL SYMPOSIUM ON AMERICAN CULINARY HISTORY**
University of Michigan, Clements Library
Ann Arbor, MI
**May 18–20, 2007**
www.clements.umich.edu.

# Members' News

On April 20, CHO co-founder **Bridget Wranich**, her husband Rene Malagon and their four-year old daughter, Isabella, welcomed Jake Isaias into their family. He weighed in at 6 lbs, 12 ozs. Welcome Jake!

**Pat Crocker** has a lovely little book out called *Scented Geranium, Pelargonium: 2006 Herb of the Year*. The first half of the book is about the many varieties, divided into the scents of rose, lemon, citrus, fruit and mint, and the second half is recipes. The scented leaves can be used to flavour water, syrup, sugar, oil, vinegar, butter, sauces, noodles, fish, beef, eggs, cakes, soufflés, puddings and beverages. Botanical information and descriptive black-and-white and colour photographs are found throughout the booklet. Pat can be reached at 519 799-5498 or pcrocker@riversongherbals.com or through her website www.riversongherbals.com.

## www.culinaryhistorians.ca

**Submissions to *Culinary Chronicles*:** We welcome items for the newsletter; however, their acceptance depends on appropriateness of subject matter, quality of writing and space. The Editor reserves the right to accept or reject submissions and to edit them.

**Upcoming themes:** Summer 2006, Number 49 – Camp Food, Publication Date: August 1
Autumn 2006, Number 50 – Restaurants, Catering and Eating Out, Publication Date: November 1
Winter 2007, Number 51 – Chocolate and Candy, Publication Date: February 1

**Other possible future themes and topics on the Editor's list**: the dairy industry; pasta in Canadian kitchens; cookies; African-Canadian Soul Food; community vegetable gardens; the diaspora of French-Canadian foodways; meals, mealtimes, definitions of meals; manuscript recipes; Inuit foodways; oh! and so many more possibilities. Do you have a suggestion?

***For future issues, the Editor is looking for photographs of culinary whatzits. Do you have a whatzit you'd like to contribute?***

**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.

**Members:**
Enjoy the quarterly newsletter, may attend CHO events at special member's rates, and receive up-to-date information on Ontario food-history happenings. 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.

**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



**Newsletter Committee: Fiona Lucas, Ed Lyons, Liz Driver.** Thank you to regular contributor Dean Tudor, and to Carolyn Blackstock, Woodside National Historic Site, Amy Scott, Maggie Newell, Mya Sangster, Ed Lyons, Mary Williamson and Peter Myers.

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