

Culinary Historians of Ontario

Winter 1998 Number 15



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.

Home is Where the Hearth is...

The kitchen hearth was a hub of activity in the 18th and early 19th centuries. It's where food was prepared and warmth and light were sought. It was where stories were told, news was shared and families gathered. It's easy to become comfortably enveloped by the romance of this image and often you may find comfort in it.

Today, historic sites and homes try to recreate the atmosphere described above. Bread and biscuits are baked or soups are simmered in hopes of enticing visitors to stay a little longer and enjoy the warmth of the fire and ambiance of the room. But, the reality of living and working with a kitchen hearth was not necessarily all warmth and light. Cooking over a kitchen hearth was hot, smoky and labour intensive. Boiling water, simmering soups, boiling puddings, roasting meat, broiling chops and baking biscuits were all done by using the wood fire and its coals.

The kitchen hearth was a place where experience at the job was a necessity. The determination of temperature was detected merely by the senses. The sense of touch was the most important, but running second was the sense of smell. A simple look at a dish could tell an experienced cook if it was done or not and acute hearing was an asset because one could determine by the sounds from the pot over the fire whether or not it was cooking too fast or too slow.

The hearth could also be a dangerous place mainly due to women's clothing styles. They wore long dresses made of flammable fabrics which were made fuller by layers of petticoats. The occurrence of fires in the kitchen were not only due to food-related accidents such as grease fires, but also because dress hems, petticoats, sleeves and bonnet ties caught fire.

They referred to this as hearth death. According to Rachel Feild, author of *Irons in the Fire: A History of Cooking Equipment, 1984*, "Up to the seventeenth century the principal cause of death among women, second only to childbirth, was hearth death."

Many early cookbooks include instructions for dealing with this deadly kitchen accident. In 1831, *The Cook Not Mad; or Rational Cookery* gives the following solution to preventing hearth death:

"No. 254. The only sure way to stop the blaze of a female's dress when accidentally caught on fire.

If children or adults, let them prostrate themselves on the floor as soon as the clothes are discovered to be on fire and commence rolling in such a manner as to smother the flames, and let blankets, water or any thing else at hand, be applied as soon as assistance comes. Many fatal accidents might be prevented by observing the above. To stand upright or run is sure destruction."

This is not to distract you from your romantic view of the kitchen hearth. I believe it's natural to be drawn to and mesmerized by a roaring fire in a kitchen where the smells of food and wood smoke mingle in the air and tantalize you. I believe that a hearth was a busy place where people came together for warmth and comfort. I truly believe that home is where the hearth is.

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Eve's Pudding

On 14 September 1996, Beth Mitchell and I, Brenda Lightfoot, representing the Incorporated Militia of Upper Canada, were invited to cook in the officers' kitchen at Fort George on Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Fort George was established by the British in 1796, and celebrated its bicentennial in 1996. It's situated on the Niagara River opposite Fort Niagara in New York State. It was from Fort George that Sir Isaac Brock rode 7 miles to the battle at Queenston Heights.

The kitchen is a separate building just behind the officers' mess. It's well equipped and reflects the efficiency needed to prepare proper meals for the officers. The kitchen staff were professional cooks but not all the meals were cooked on site. The officers took their evening meal at Navy Hall just outside the fort.

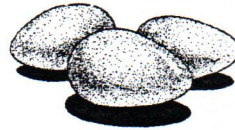
My day began at 9:30 am. By 6:00 pm dinner was served. The menu was simple: Beef stew with fresh baked bread and biscuits, apple and blackberry cobbler with hot custard sauce, and the hit of the day, **Eve's Pudding** served with warm rum sauce.

Eve's Pudding was our historical dish of the day, and was a huge success from the start to the last slice left on the plate. The ingredients are simple, and as the saying goes: "It's all in the pudding", or rather it was all in the cooking. It's exhausting work to keep a rolling boil in a Dutch oven over an open fire. Panic

sets in when you realize that the water you've so carefully added has brought everything to a standstill and that the woodpile has almost disappeared! I have never in my life been so attentive to boiling water. When it came time to do dishes, I was all for doing them in cold water!

Our efforts were rewarded when it was time to carefully separate our lovely puddings from their linen wraps. They were perfect, lovely round spheres with a delicate brown crust. Sliced and served with warm rum sauce, it tasted very like a Christmas pudding. I'm glad to say only one slice remained at dinner's end.

Happily, all the dishes cooked that day turned out well. This was done with the kind co-operation of the Fort George staff. We stepped back in time and created a historical culinary dish that would have pleased even the most discriminating officer of the time.



Two Receipts for Eve's Pudding

*Grate twelve ounces of bread, mix with it the same quantity of suet, the same of apples made fine, the same of currants, mix with these four eggs, a little nutmeg and lemon, boil three hours; serve with pudding sauce.

The Cook Not Mad; or Rational Cookery,
Kingston, Upper Canada, 1831, no. 99

* If you want a good pudding, mind what you are taught.
Take eggs six in number, when bought for a groat,
The fruit with which Eve her husband did cozen,
Well pared, and well chopped, at least half a dozen
Six ounces of bread, let Moll eat the crust,
And crumble the rest as fine as the dust;
Six ounces of currants, from the stem you must sort,
Lest you break out your teeth, and spoil all the sport
Six ounces of sugar won't make it too sweet,
Some salt and some nutmeg will make it complete
Three hours let it boil without any flutter,
But Adam won't like it without wine and butter.

Ladies of Toronto, etc. *The Canadian Home Cook Book*, Toronto,
1877, page 166.

Brenda Lightfoot is an enthusiastic hearth cook. She re-enacts with IMUC (Incorporated Militia of Upper Canada) and is a member of the Volunteer Historic Cooking Group at Heritage Toronto.

REPRODUCTION KITCHENWARE

In the Summer 1997 (no.9) newsletter, Laura Higgins posed a culinary query to CHO concerning a Canadian supplier of cast iron cooking equipment. Little did Laura know the full implication of this query for it soon sent her on a investigation of Canadian and American suppliers of reproduction cookware. Laura has generously supplied us with the fruits of her investigation. Although we are unable to print all of the listings, here are a few. If CHO members would like the entire list, we would be pleased to send it to you upon request.

☪ Berry Hill Limited: Farm Equipment and Country Living Catalogue

75 Burwell Rd., St. Thomas, ON N5P 3R5
(519) 631-0480 (800) 668-3072
Ice cream freezers, apple peelers, butter molds, kitchen and farm gadgets....

☪ Crockery Barn

1424 Yonge St. Toronto, ON M4T 1Y5
(416) 968-0976
Pudding basins, gripstand bowls....

☪ Embros (European Cookware)

1170 Yonge St., Toronto, ON M4W 2L9
(416) 964-6331
Copperware, pudding basins....

☪ Garth Dallman

223 Hatt Street, Dundas, ON L9H 2G9
(905) 627-3997
Pottery reproductions, redware crocks, flower pots, bowls, jugs....

☪ Niagara Castings

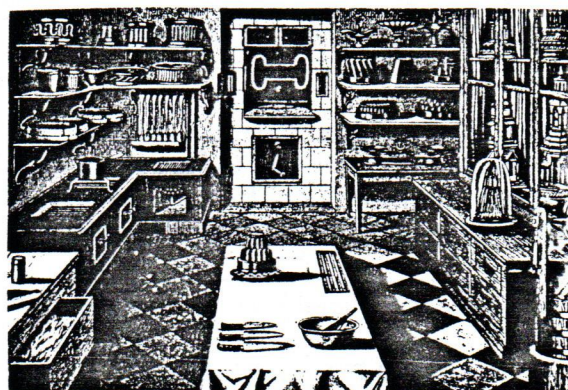
P.O. Box 826, 106 Queen St,
Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON L0S 1J0
(800) 265-0633 (519) 227-2651
Cast iron cookware....

☪ The Park House Tinsmiths, King's Navy Yard Park

214 Dalhousie St. Amherstburg, ON N9V 1W4
(519) 736-2511
Scoops, wash basins, spice boxes, roasters, reflector ovens, biscuit cutters, ladles....
Call for illustrated brochure.

☪ Sue's Studio Pottery

293 Albert St. Kingston, ON K7L 3V7
(613) 544-7573
Early Ontario pottery.



☪ Black Creek Village Crafted Products

1000 Murray Ross Parkway, Downsview, ON
M3J 2P3 (416) 736-1733
Clocks, churns, brooms, woven goods, wrought iron items, tin items, clothing, jewellery ...

☪ Fortune Houseware and Importing Co.

388 Spadina Ave., Toronto, ON M5T 2G6
(416) 593-6999
Mortars and pestles, pudding basins, crocks, pitchers, baking kettles, loaf pans...

☪ J.K. Jouppien

Heritage Resource Consultant
R.R.# 1 St. Catherines, ON L2R 6P7
(905) 684-7986
Tinder boxes, cast iron items, sugar nippers, sugar cones, flatware, earthenware jugs....

☪ Old Fort William, Cooper

Old Fort William, Vicker Heights, P.O.
Thunder Bay, ON P0T 2Z0
(613) 273-5693
Kegs, casks, buckets, tubs....

☪ ALHFAM Association for Living Historical Farms, Replica Committee

P.O. Box 111, East Winthrop, Maine,
04343, U.S.A. (207) 622-5048
Send for their catalogue.

Cooking meals over an open fire required skills of culinary judgement less required in today's kitchens of mechanical wizardry. cooking technique which were full of advice - some conflicting, most generally accepted - but no one could offer exact instructions guide by two late 20th century cooks experienced in the ways of down hearth cookery.

Hearth Boiling

"Boiling, though not the first invented, is certainly the easiest of all culinary processes; and for this very reasons, it is often the worst performed."

Meg Dods, *Cook and Housewife's Manual*, 1833

Many foods can be boiled: puddings, stews and soups, whole fowls or joints, vegetables, and the traditional one pot meal called "boiled dinner." Actually, "boiling" can be misleading because often "simmering" is better. They both mean immersing in a hot liquid (water, broth, milk, etc.) but boiling is vigorous circulation of bubbles, whereas simmering is a gentle and at times imperceptible motion of the liquid. Puddings in a cloth require a constant boil.

What is an inexperienced hearth cook in 1998 to make of this receipt?

A BOILED FLOUR PUDDING.

"One quart of milk, four to six eggs, nine spoonfuls of flour, a little salt, put into a strong cloth and boiled one hour and a half."

Cook Not Mad, 1831, no. 83

◆Notice that Eve's Pudding on page 2 doesn't even mention a cloth, but simply says "boil 3 hours".

GENERAL RULES TO BE OBSERVED IN BOILING PUDDINGS IN CLOTHS

Pots:

1. Keep pots, pans and lids clean
2. Choose a pot with plenty of room for pudding size
3. Put a plate or trivet in bottom of pot if cloth likely to stick
4. Lid should fit well

Fire:

1. Have a hot, steady fire over a bed of hot coals
2. Add wood only as necessary to maintain fire that in turn maintains rolling boil of water

Water:

1. Should always be at a rolling boil to keep pudding moving which helps prevent unnecessary stodginess and prevents bag sticking to pot
2. Use a lid to prevent loss of water through steam
3. When replacing evaporated water ensure new water is boiling so temperature in pot is maintained

Pudding Cloth:

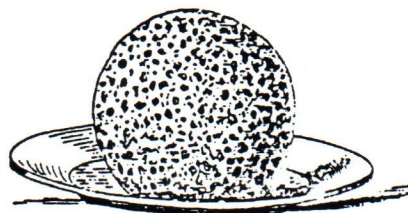
1. Cloth must be scrupulously clean, dry and odourless,

otherwise cooked pudding could taste "off" (easily accomplished in a modern washing machine!)

2. A square of close grained muslin, linen, cotton or cotton flannel of at least 20" x 20" (50 x 50 cm), up to 36" x 36" (90 x 90 cm)
3. Prewash/preshrink fabrics

Method:

1. Dip the cloth into boiling water with fingers holding 2 corners. Pull it out; let drip for a few seconds until excess water can be squeezed out without burning hands. Cloth should be damp, not wet.
2. Quickly lay cloth flat on table, generously sprinkle flour from a waiting crock, shake off the excess, then drape the cloth into a waiting bowl.
3. Quickly pour in the prepared pudding mixture. With a 6" to 8" (15 to 20 cm) piece of precut string, firmly tie the cloth into a ball. Trim the string ends. Follow this advice from Hannah Glasse in *The Art of Cookery*, 1796: "If a Bread-Pudding, tie it loose [to give it space to swell]; if a Batter-Pudding, tie it close [to avoid a flaccid texture and enforce the circular shape]".
4. Plunge the wrapped pudding into boiling water to seal its outer layer and avoid sogginess. Boil for the designated time. The bigger and denser the pudding, the longer the boiling time. If in doubt about the time, compare your pudding recipe to similar ones.
5. Pull pudding from boiling water, dip briefly into a waiting bowl of cold water and then set down on plate (because it's messy). Cut the string. Gently peel away the fabric and roll the pudding onto a serving dish.



COOKERY

Experience was and still is the best teacher for hearth cookery. Many early cook books were divided into sections according to because too many variables affected the outcome (fluctuating temperature, type of wood, type of cooking pot). Herewith is a handy

Hearth Baking

“There can be no positive rules as to the exact time of baking each article. Skill in baking is the result of practice, attention, and experience. Much, of course, depends on the state of the fire, and on the size of the things to be baked, and something on the thickness of the pans or dishes.”

Eliza Leslie, *Seventy-Five Receipts for Pastry, Cakes and Sweetmeats*, 1828

Often difficult, dangerous and in some cases, fatal, hearth baking was once the most common method of baking for most households where the hearth did not contain a built-in bake oven. Dutch ovens (also called bake kettles) and griddles were for frequent, quick bakings (a bake oven would take 1 ½ - 2 hours to heat up) and offered the cook versatility and control over her food..

Equipment:

BAKE KETTLE OR DUTCH OVEN

A versatile, all-purpose pot that can be used for both cooking and baking. The cast iron kettle has three legs which stands on the hearth over hot coals. A tight-fitting concave lid sits on top with coals shoveled beneath and around pot.

Purpose:

Used to bake breads, cakes, pastries and even small cuts of meat and egg dishes.

Method:

1. Have a hot, steady fire with a sufficient supply of coals available for baking.
2. Preheat oven and lid by placing them separately near the fire until they are thoroughly heated.
3. Place a trivet or pebbles in the bottom of the pot to hold a baking pan or dish.
4. With a shovel, prepare a bed of hot, level coals to the side of the hearth (not directly in front).
5. Place oven on top of hot coals, making sure coals do not touch the bottom of the pot.
6. Place baking pan in the oven and shovel coals on top of the lid.
7. To check food, sweep coals away from the lid and lift lid handle with a sturdy fork. If food is cooking too quickly, remove some of the coals.
8. When baking is completed, remove the oven top to prevent condensation.

Equipment:

FIREPLACE GRIDDLE

A flat, rounded heavy iron pan with a shallow lip. Fireplace griddle is hung from a crane where it can be placed near the desired heat of the fire.

Purpose:

Used to cook pancakes, griddle cakes or to sear small pieces of meat or vegetables.

Method:

1. Always keep this piece of ironware seasoned with a vegetable oil to prevent foods from sticking or burning.
2. Have a hot, steady fire available.
3. Warm the griddle by the hearth.
4. Place the griddle on a pot hanger and adjust (length or shorten) near or over the fire based on your needs.
5. Do not place griddle directly over fire when cooking pancakes or cakes such as Shrewsbury or Derby, for they will burn easily.
6. If searing meat or vegetables, a more intense heat will be required; therefore the griddle should be situated closer to the fire.
7. When moving contents of the griddle, swing crane away from the hearth area and use a long handled metal flipper.

***** Like modern cast ironware, do not clean griddle or oven with soapy water and make sure that iron is seasoned with oil after each use. This prevents the iron from rusting.**

Indian Flappers

Eliza Leslie, *Seventy-Five Receipts, for Pastry, Cakes, and Sweetmeats*, 1828.

“Have ready a pint of sifted Indian meal, mixed with handful of wheat flour, and a small teaspoonful of salt. Beat four eggs very light, and stir them by degrees into a quart of milk, in turn with the meal. They can be made in a very short time, and should be baked as soon as mixed on a hot griddle; allow a large ladel full of batter to each cake, and make them all of the same size. Send them to the table hot, buttered and cut in half.”

Written by Christine Ritsma

FOOD NETWORK REVIEW

by Carolyn Blackstock.

Did you check out the Food Network while it was free on cable television? There's Mediterranean Mario, Two Hot Tamales, Pasta Monday to Fridays, Bakers' Dozen, Chef du Jour, Julia Child, Two Fat Ladies, Essence of Emeril . . . well, you get the idea.

Program: READY, SET, COOK

Host: Sissy Biggars

Format: This is a game show where two professional cooks are teamed with two amateurs who have selected ingredients from which the pros must create a meal in 18 minutes.

Review: The premise of this show bothers me since I don't think speed in cooking is a particularly admirable goal. The other problem is the scoring which is not based on taste but on appearance and creativity. You won't learn much from this show.

Program: TASTE

Host: David Rosengarten

Format: Each episode revolves around just one ingredient, recipe, or product.

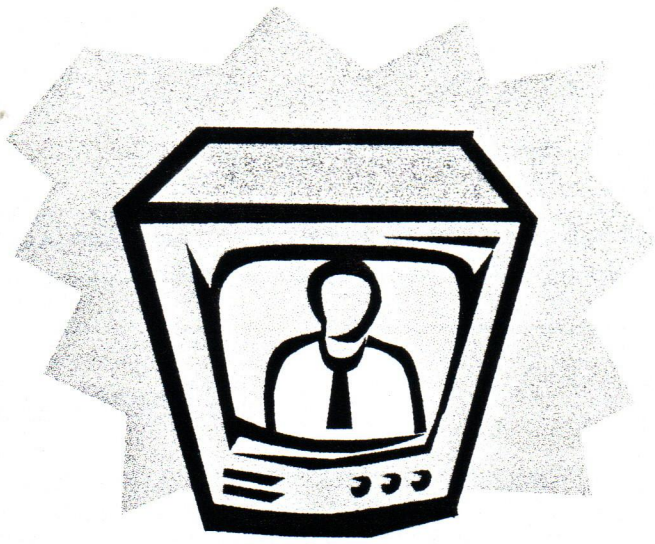
Review: The host can be annoying but he is easier to listen to than many of the others. I love the concept of exploring one topic in depth - he even throws in some historical tidbits (which aren't always entirely accurate so I'd check before quoting him). Recent episodes looked at vanilla, olive oil, cinnamon rolls, lamb shanks, pumpkin, and sweetbreads. In the vanilla segment I actually found out what the vanilla plant looks like. If you want to recreate the recipe you're probably better off writing for the recipe (or getting it from the internet) than trying to create it from the show.

Program: JULIA CHILD

Host: Julia Child

Format: Julia prepares a meal which is heavily influenced by traditional French cooking.

Review: Although these programs were made many years ago they hold up pretty well. One of the best things about this show for me is that Julia Child can be a kitchen klutz just like me. Batters slop out, she forgets things, she can't always get an oyster open and readily admits it.



Program: TWO FAT LADIES

Hosts: Jennifer Paterson and Clarissa Dickson Wright

Format: Two women get together in exotic locations in Great Britain to prepare typical English fare for guests.

Review: This has to be the hottest new topic for foodies. I love this show even though I doubt I'll ever have the opportunity to cook pheasant shot by my gamekeeper but at least I know what Mrs. Beeton is talking about. This is English cooking at its heartiest. I would love to meet these women. The only drawback to this show is that I really have no idea how to prepare the entire recipe but apparently there will soon be a published cookbook available in Canada.

Most of the other shows are pretty forgettable. **Emeril Legasse's** shows are noisy and make me want to "Bam" him back. **Dining Around** reviews restaurants in New York and San Francisco and therefore is of little value to me. And **Three Dog Bakery** is of curiosity value only, after all how many of us want to eat the same meal as our dogs. **Quench** is okay. A recent episode on the resurgence of ciders was interesting. **Two Hot Tamales** are incredibly annoying. **Pick of the Day** looks interesting since it concentrates on vegetables and fruits and the host seems pleasant but it is not on very often.

Until there is a **Canadian Food Network**, I'll stick to the TVO schedule of **Two Fat Ladies**, **Delia Smith**, Janice Robin's **Wine Course** and CBC's gentle **Urban Peasant**, who reassures me that whatever I do is okay.

Carolyn Blackstock is a longtime food history advocate and has worked in many historic kitchens.

BUTCHERING BEE WORKSHOP

at Joseph Schneider Haus

On November 28th Joseph Schneider Haus in Kitchener hosted a Butchering Bee Workshop for CHO members.

We started the day with a slide show depicting the stages of butchering a pig. In the historic house Mr Harold Snyder, a retired professional butcher, and his son cut up a freshly butchered pig into various cuts of meat while we asked all our questions. I finally know why pork tenderloin is so expensive - there's only two pieces in the entire pig! I discovered that how the meat is cut depends on the cultural background of the butcher. Mr Snyder was trained in the Mennonite style and is a fifth generation butcher. He was able to point out some of the changes that have occurred in butchering over the years. For example, in the past the fat on a pig was expected to be four fingers high but now pigs are butchered much leaner.

Next we got a chance to make fresh sausages, including the testing of the casings by blowing into them. We watched the stuffing of a pig's stomach to make a haggis-like sausage called *Schwadamahga* sausage which we later tasted.

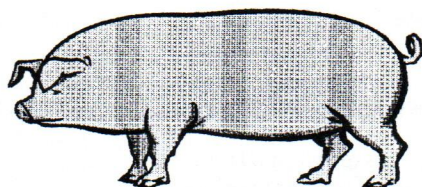
At noon we were treated to a fabulous lunch of the fresh sausage (*Bratwurst*) plus summer sausage, *Metzelsuppe* (a bean and vegetable soup), assorted sweets and sours, rye bread, sauerkraut, apple cider and *schnitz kuchen* for dessert.

After lunch, a J.S.H. interpreter explained how to make headcheese which includes the split head, organ meats, skin and the pig tail boiled together for hours.

Mr. Franz Kissling, a professional butcher who trained in Switzerland, showed the group the European tradition to preparing sausage and answered our many questions. In particular, I learned how blood sausage is prepared and that butchers need to apprentice three years to become a fully trained butcher.

Many of us were overwhelmed with the information provided during the day. It was a terrific event for everyone involved.

Submitted by Carolyn Blackstock.



ALHFAM Conference

Doon Heritage Crossroads June 21 - 26 1998

It is hardly surprising that at this year's ALHFAM conference, so many CHO members will be presenting papers and workshops to museum folk from all over North America.

Bridget, Fiona and Christine will also be presenting a 3 hour workshop, entitled, "An Apple A Day. . . : Culinary Treatment of the Sick in late 19th Century." We'll be concentrating on the culinary solutions which housewives provided in their sick room, kitchen and gardens. We're also sponsoring "A Sunday Herbal" at the Steckle Farm on Sunday June 21.

In addition, CHO has been approached by the ALHFAM committee to prepare several historic foods for the opening night reception. Our section will be called "Sweet, Sour & Savoury: Seated at Ontario's Dinner Table". If any members would like to spend a Saturday morning or afternoon in May preparing these foods, we'd very much appreciate your assistance. We've planned to prepare the foods at Doon Heritage Crossroads in Kitchener during: **May 2, 9, 16, and 30th.** Phone any of the CHO editorial team to confirm your participation or to hook a ride.

All CHO members will receive the conference outline with the May issue. Call Doon if you would like more information.

Culinary Calendar

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

February

Tuscany - Robust Yet Uncomplicated

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

February 3 - 24, Tues. Evenings, 7 - 10 pm

Come savour a cuisine as old as the Etruscans and influential to the French.

Cost \$ 140 per 4 week session, class size limited.

Blue and White China: A Revolution in Dinnerware Patterns

Heritage Toronto (416) 392-6827

Heritage Toronto Resource Centre

February 5 12:00 noon

Speaker - Conrad Bielmacki, Decorative Arts Instructor, University of Toronto & ROM.

Cost \$4.00

Perth County Cuisine - Yours to Discover

Chez Soleil (519) 271-7404

February 5 - 26, Thurs. Evenings, 7 - 10 pm

In the pork capital of Ontario this course takes a look at "the other white meat", as well as apples, trout, high bush cranberries and other delicious treasures.

Cost \$ 140 per 4 week session, class size limited.

The Foods of Love

The Ontario Historical Society (416) 226-9011

February 14 7:00 pm

Enjoy a buffet supper of the foods of love, a selection of beverages, and a sweetmeat basket of treats to sample.

Registration required.

Cost \$30.00 per person.

March

Antipasto to Meze - Dim Sum to Tapas

Chez Soleil (519) 271-7405

March 5 - 26, Tues. Evenings, 7 - 10 pm

Fast foods from around the world.

Cost \$ 140 per 4 week session, class size limited.

Seedy Saturday

Black Creek Pioneer Village &

Seeds of Diversity (416) 736-1733

March 7 10:00 - 4:00 pm

Enjoy a day which includes heritage seeds, a seed exchange, workshops, local vendors, demonstrations...

Cost \$3.00

April

Mexican Cuisine - Fast, Festive & Vibrant

Chez Soleil (519) 271-7405

April 7 - 28, Tues. Evenings, 7 - 10 pm

From moles to quesadillas, discover a cuisine that revolutionized Europe's pantry.

Cost \$140 per 4 week session, class size limited.

Introduction to Hearth Cooking

The Gibson House Museum (416) 395-7432

April 4, 10 - 2 pm

Try your hand at cooking in Mrs. Gibson's kitchen.

Cost \$25 Pre-registration required.

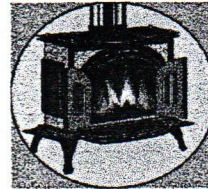
19th Century Desserts

The Gibson House Museum (416) 395-7432

April 18, 10 - 2 pm

Discover the delicious range of 19th century sweets.

Cost \$25 Pre-registration required.



Culinary Credits

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Thanks for this issue to Carolyn Blackstock, Laura Higgins & Brenda Lightfoot.

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\$12 (Cdn.) annual subscription

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