

Chapter 7 - Chow, Chuck, Grits, Grub, Nosebag, Scarf, Vittles - au Naturel

"At the turnoff the road was again rampant with the sort of potholes I had come to know and love in last places. Potholed roads encourage lost civilities in the soul; in Quirpon a man from whom I asked directions gave me a pair of new hand knit stockings, saying only that he didn't want them." - Lawrence Millman, LAST PLACES - A Journey in the North, (1990) Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston.

Part 1. Reminiscence Redundantly

"Seems like th' olde farte hath dotardly slipt moorings and is drugging anchor onto a windw'rd shore," opines Ed. "A chapter ago he promised details on how to raise food to titillate a dawg's and imaginary people's appetites. Instead, 'last places' has reappeared and he is humming and mouthing the words of that old ditty - *'When I was a young man, before my beard was grey, to all the ships and sailor-men I gave my heart away.'*"

"You're right, Ed, my noble, patient, gentle readers must await whilst I embrocate my soul with memories of rafts, boats and ships I once loved," replies the man, "and I promise not to include such jerry-built crafts as the 'Mud-Wash,' and later, the unnamed platform on four 50-gallon drums, powered beneath by my four children, as I relaxed up above, delightfully ensconced on a reclining canvas chair."

"Oh no you don't," yells Ed. "You can't get out of telling 'em about the raft, and how you took advantage of three little girls and a littler boy. Before you allowed them to push you around on that raft and catch seafood for your chowder, you conned the poor tykes into believing it was fun to 'live off the land,' so they were sent off to glean the autumn fields for anything edible they could find - tomatoes, peppers, wild onions, sun-dried corn on the cob, and several bags of pine cones to fuel that barely portable cast iron camp-stove with its roomy frypan; whilst you latched onto bacon and potatoes from the kitchen, then met them at the laboratory, to grind the corn into meal.

"You taught 'em to keep the craft headed into the wind," continues Ed, "so Your Highness (meaning high above the water) would not be bothered by the smoke whilst frying the bacon in small pieces, cooking the vegetables in added water, and throwing in dressed or shucked crabs, clams, and scallops that they caught along the way. Finally, you stirred in the corn meal as a thickener, to remind 'em, SUH, that in the olde tyme South, blood is thicker than chowder."

"Not long after that, our raft was wrecked by a hurricane," the man recalls, "and after that we sailed an 18-foot wooden sloop, named *Luv*, a boat that Chesapeake Bay watermen used to describe as a sharpie. Only 45 minutes was required to cross Bogue Sound to the totally unoccupied ocean beach (now the heavily populated Emerald Isle). When we returned to our home mooring, a wasp would fly from shore and enter its residence somewhere under the forward deck, a happening we observed for many years. Frequently, we were greeted by a covey of thirteen mallard ducks, who bivouacked in our yard. They would join us while swimming, and during hunting season were given full diplomatic immunity, as certified members of our household.

"One summer night, Todd and I didn't feel quite as secure as those ducks, while anchored 30 miles down-east, off Harkers Island. A fisherman circled and bounced the *Luv* around, and shouted insults. But attitudes were changing, and this could have been one of the few remaining instances of insularity, as I was to learn aboard the stern trawler, Dan Moore.

"The State of North Carolina research vessel, *Dan Moore*, was manned by captain and crew from Harkers Island. She was an impressive 80-foot stern trawler, state of the art construction and layout for those days, and equipped 'tween-decks with laboratory and two bunks, next to a 'cold room' containing refrigeration equipment and a saltwater ice-making machine. The Seafood Laboratory had constructed two wooden tanks measuring 4'W x 8'L x 4'H. One was placed on deck and filled with circulating surface sea water, and the other was placed in the cold room and filled with sea water chilled to just above freezing.



"This trip and others that followed, was concerned with investigating the extent, distribution, and location of lobsters along the North Carolina coast, all the way out to the edge of the continental shelf, where depths reached 300 fathoms. Collections required powerful winches and extremely heavy gear, which, it was feared, might impose physical damage, and severe pressure and temperature stresses on the lobsters.

"Things went swimmingly well for men and lobsters on this first trip to the edge of the continental shelf. The lobsters were caught in encouraging numbers and survived well in both tanks. We looked forward to an uneventful voyage," recalls the man, "until that

night, north of Cape Hatteras, when a Navy depth-charge was dumped on the deck along with lobsters and by-catch.

"I was in the laboratory, when I heard the thump, followed by complete silence, then the sound of heavy boots scampering towards the bow. The captain yelled for me to grab flotation gear and come on deck. We clustered in front of the pilot house while he called the Coast Guard (CG). Meanwhile crew members reported that the unwelcome visitor was giving off a purplish glow. CG asked the Captain about numbers and markings on the outside of the mine. I started aft to check it out, when I heard a shout, 'Ted Miller, get your ass out of there, you ain't a member of this crew!' Shortly thereafter, a message came from CG: 'You have a dangerous mine on board. Don't move, a Coast Guard vessel is on the way.'

"Everyone, except captain and mate, spent half the night locked in the galley behind steel doors, and were then permitted to squeeze through a man-hole and huddle near the bow," continues the man. "When the Coast Guard vessel arrived, it remained over a mile away. We proceeded to Norfolk, where it was gingerly unloaded by Naval personnel.

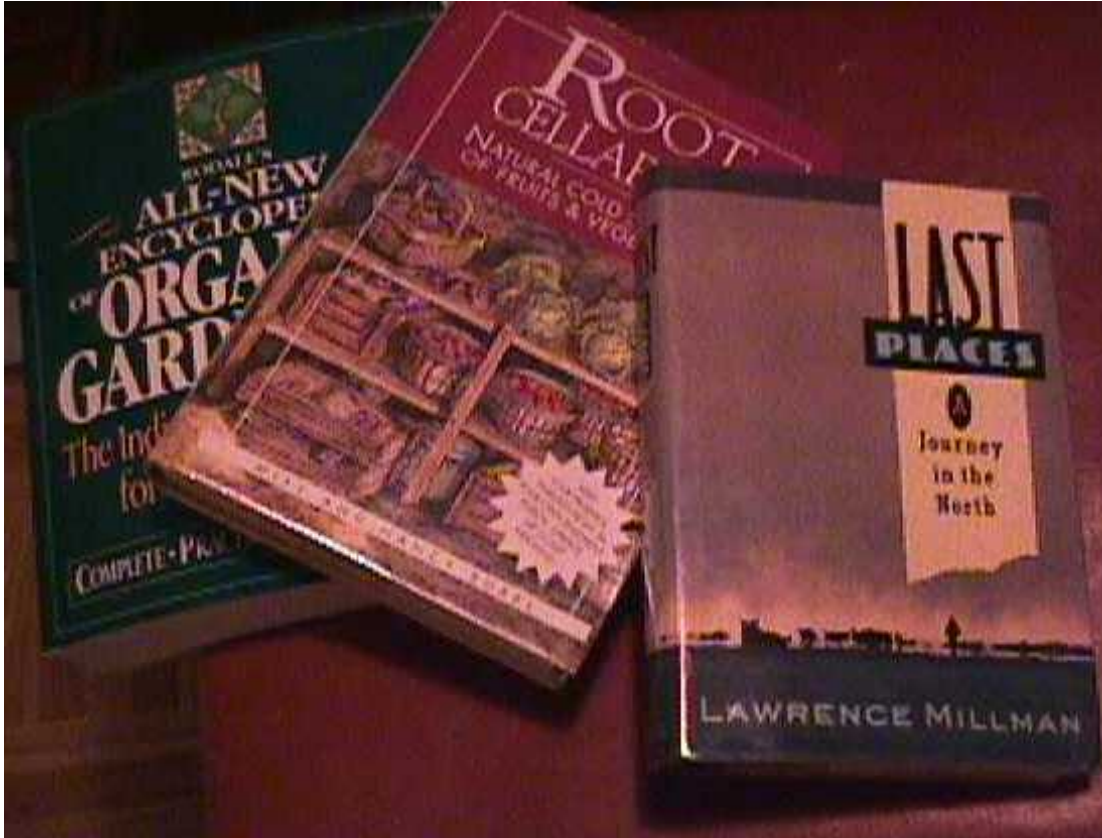
"I'll never know if this experience involved real danger, or was simply precautionary. But it had a bonding effect on crew and supercargo, and from then on the Harkers Islanders were extremely friendly. The cook welcomed me into the galley where I compared lobsters boiled in the conventional manner, with ones that I steamed. We decided that neither method produced as tasty a meat as when the lobster was killed and dressed raw, and used in one of America's favorite dishes, 'Lobster Cantonese,'" says the man.

"It's bad enough to drop a live lobster into boiling water," says Ed, "but killing them in the raw? Oh my!"

"It's quick, Ed," replies the man. "A knife blade to the brain, then chop up the tail, claws, and other meaty pieces for easy removal with chopsticks, then cook in a sauce that includes vegetable oil, ground pork, chicken broth, fresh ginger. sherry, sugar, cornstarch, chopped scallions, whole eggs, and flour.

"Another difficulty - many of the North Carolinians who later served on our taste panels were not familiar with lobsters, and tended to compare lobster meat with locally produced bluefin crab meat - something like comparing apples and oranges."

"Enuf lobster chatter, old man," says Ed. "Seems like an eon since you mentioned Lawrence Millman. Must I remind you that in Chapter 2 you described how, in the spring of 1991, you discovered a spiritual link to Millman's book, and the sheer happiness of finding Dora and yourself aboard *M/V Taverner* as the ship came alive near midnight, en route to Labrador via 'Iceberg Alley,' and about to retrace the last leg of Millman's journey?"



Part 2. A Cornucopia of Northern Peninsula Foods

"What is truly germane about these sweet and bitter memories, is that Millman regretfully watched the arrival of the blacktop in L'Anse aux Meadows not long before the Northern Peninsula became my second home," recalls the man. "And I've been reading some additional observations in a book called, *Living on the Edge - The Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland*, (1995), L. F. Felt and P. R. Sinclair, Inst. of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and another book, titled, *Rough Food - The Seasons of Subsistence in Northern Newfoundland*, (1994), John T. Omohundro, published by the same Institute.

"I will not attempt a detailed description of these excellent studies except to state my conclusion that the investigators admired the resourcefulness of the population - how they adapted to the need to grow, collect, and share an adequate food supply, how they cut wood for fuel and for building comfortable homes, and how they achieved a level of pride and satisfaction (as measured by polls) above what has been found in Canadian families with much higher incomes," says the man. "But now this unique lifestyle, a source of pride for most Newfoundlanders, is disappearing. Omohundro quoted a leader who had served on the Main Brook Town Council for 20 years: 'When I began I had the attitude that I was going to get people from the outside to put money into the town to develop it. Now I have a grassroots approach. The town will have to pull itself up using its own natural resources. Big companies from the outside just come in and take the heart out of these resources, and then they're gone.'

"Brave words, but what would this ex-councilman say now?" wonders the man, "with urban sprawl and tourist-hype spreading east to west across the Island and invading that last redoubt, the great Northern Peninsula, via the Viking Trail and the new blacktop to Main Brook, 'opening up' Labrador with new highways so visitors can have northern adventures in comfort, to hasten industrial development, and to accomplish more rapid depletion of natural resources.

"The globalization lobby has imbued the provincial government with a strong belief in quick-fix mega-projects, as a way to soak up the unemployed and bring contentment and happiness to the land. In close proximity is the sagging infrastructure, high unemployment, and NFLD youngsters going elsewhere to seek work."

"Oh my, oh my," moans Ed. "How did people survive before they were fed so many 'great expectations' and so little meaningful assistance?"

"The book, *Rough Food*, describes a hard way of life, but a satisfying one, that produced a wide variety of foods, accompanied by preservation measures that required lots of salt, and pickling with the assistance of the vinegar plant," replies the man. "But now most households rely on freezers and 'canning' in jars, dried cod, salt fish, frozen fish and game, and they frequently find themselves with surpluses at the end of the winter," explains the man, "and I've begun to realize how extensively their kind of gardening contributes to their nutritional requirements."

Part 3. Pristine Environment - Pristine Food

"I have a dream...." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929 - 1968)

"Martin, your leadership had such a liberating effect on black people that it was inevitable that you would be snuffed out," says the man, "so that many black people could continue to live peacefully in poverty, have difficulty finding jobs, and keep privatized prisons brim-full of inmates.

"I have a dream too, dear Martin, as foolhardy as yours, since it butts up against all the injustices of our food production, distribution and marketing system," continues the man. "I long to jump on a podium and shout, 'Halt! Take Heed! You're tampering with the health of our planet and all its living creatures.'"

"Farm chemurgy, first and last," jibes Ed. "You'll never forget that lecture when you were a student at JHU, when you dreamed of a pristine petroleum-free nation, clear blue skies, and 'smog' not in any dictionary."

"Pipe down, Edward," says the man. "I'm not a Martin Luther King, willing to give life itself for a cause. Besides, who would listen to an old fart?"

"You've said a mouthful, Chum. I guess I'm the only one in the whole world who has to listen to what you say," replies Ed. "So why don't you borrow an old nag and joust at windmills?"

"Right on! I'm gonna do something just as difficult. Have you ever tried to tell a Newfoundlander what to do?" replies the man.

"Well, it won't be as hard as getting that Gargantuan food industry to show a smidgen of concern for the environment, and the people, dogs and cats it's feeding," observes Ed. "If you attempt to collide head-on, it'll be gnat vs express train."

"Thank goodness," says the man. "This is a kind, gentle, tolerant place, respectful of other's opinions, so all I must fear are the changes arriving here, unimpeded. Nine years ago, when I first traveled these shores, I thought, 'Here is a society that is rightfully proud of its permanence, stability, and enviable differences,' but now my friends are under pressure to join the frantic all-encompassing world order - the featureless, the mundane."

"What grubby weather," says the man. "I must go out on the dock to see those Labrador fishing boats that the wind blew in."



Foul Weather at Cow Head, Newfoundland



Dorman Fowler's Labrador Fishing Boat



Captain Dorman Fowler



Preparing Jiggs Dinner Aboard Dorman's Boat

"Goodness Gracious, must I call the funny farm?" wonders Ed. "The olde farte's got an eye for the dramatic! He's out there with Theodore on the end of the dock, dimly visible in the fading light, facing wind, rain, tethered boats, mountains interlaced with purple haze, shouting a message barely heard above the crashing waves : 'I HAVE A DREAM! KEEP NORTHERN PENINSULA PRISTINE!'"

Part 4. Old Ways with a Modern Twist

Slowly we are carving a new lifestyle. To some it may seem to be one that is looking backward, for it cherishes the homely, the rude, the unpackaged, the unmechanized, the careful. We do not think of it as a blind shutting out of any visions of the future, but

rather, for us, the right way to face the future. The carving is not easy. It is often painful. But in it are the seeds of sanity, of joy. - Mary Cary, Basic Baskets, quoted in the Preface of Root Cellaring, Natural Cold Storage of Fruits & Vegetables, (1991) Mike and Nancy Bubel, A Garden Way Publishing Book, Pownal, VT.

"Are you okay, Skipper? Let me tie that crazy dawg to this cleat, and git you down below out of this heah weather, it speaks of worse comin'," says Capt. Paul. "You scared th' livin' b'Jesus out o' us with your shoutin' and squallin', and we about to set, relax and enjoy this Jiggs dinner, since there's no way we goin' nowhere."

"Par for the course," says Ed. "Count on him to be rescued at his convenience. If he fell in a privy, he'd come up with a silver spoon in his mouth. There he was in the wind, rain and dark, shouting 'pristine, etc.,' and the overworked captain of that Labrador fishing boat, sheltering from the rough seas, takes him below to share their food. Now he's warm and toasty from that tumbler of rum. Listen to him, telling THEM how a proper Jiggs Dinner should be made. He's telling THEM! I can't believe it!"

"Know why it's called a 'Jiggs Dinner?'" asks the man. "Only explanation I've had in Newfoundland is that it's a meal cooked in the galley while jigging for cod. You guys are too young to remember a cartoon called, 'Maggie and Jiggs,' and how he would sneak out to Dinty Moore's to have corned beef and cabbage, his favorite meal.

"You guys done good with that there Jiggs dinner, considering you're from Labrador," insults the man. "But here's how it's done in Cooks Harbour, the most northern part of Newfoundland, according to my friend Howard":

DECKER SEZ THIS IS HOW TO PREPARE A PERFECT JIGGS DINNER (Requires a LARGE POT)

1. Salt beef and bag full of split peas in water, cook 1 hr.
 2. Cabbage, turnips, carrots, cook another hour
 3. Potatoes, and cook one-half hour.
- Eat immediately, but first remove from pot.

Why called Jiggs Dinner? A person named Jiggs didn't have time to prepare food, so he dumped everything in one pot, took it to work, put it on the sawmill steam engine, and had everything ready for lunch.

"How do you guys get a coating to stick to fried mackerel?" asks the man.

"You ain't gonna catch us there, skipper. We don't," replies Capt. Paul. "We fry the bread crumbs separately and lay the fried mackerel on the crumbs. And if we have fish'n'brews, we fry the scrunchions to crispy and let these young bucks pour all the grease on theirs while I pick at them tasty crispies and watch me cholesterol. Have you had Seal-flipper pie? Roast gull? Cod tongues? Stuffed squid? Stuffed Arctic Char? How about God's Gift to the world - Pot Head?"

"What's Pot Head?" asks the man (thereby skillfully avoiding having to admit there's something he hasn't eaten).

"Well, skipper, you've gotta go get yerself the head of a moose, caribou, or deer, and remove the eyes, ears, brain, and skin. Cut in pieces and soak in salt brine overnight, pour off brine, and cook pieces until you can remove the meat from the bones, and chop the meat fine. Boil down the broth and combine with the recovered meat, along with ground-up heart and tongue. Flavor the mess wit onions, peppers, savory and sage, add gelatin, allow to cool and set up, and I tell you b'ye, you got yerself some goooooood eatin'."

"Thank goodness," says Ed. "Finally got him and Theodore back to the cabin, drenched to their skins, but at least I didn't have to listen to him tell 'em how he makes real Pennsylvania Dutch Scrapple. He'd easily manage to out-gag that Pot Head story, and my weak stomach just can't stand hearing anymore. Oh my, what's he going to say now?"

"Ahoy thar, Edward, you're lookin' kinda peaked, kid. I'll bet a plate of Pot Head (some call it 'Brawn') would perk you up," says the man. "But you know, Ed, much as I like Newfoundland cooking, at times I think longingly of the great meals I cooked for those Chinese pirates, and the excellent cuisine tastefully prepared by the chefs at Gastronomie de Maxime, in Paris:

Teddy's Tru'lyin' Adventures in China and France

To make a long story short and a long fall shorter, Teddy was running across a field, closely followed by his dog, Corny, when they unexpectedly came upon a hole, fell in, and after a day, realized it was a very deep hole indeed. In fact, they fell seven days and nights, finally saw daylight ahead, splashed into salt water, swam to the surface right in front of a junk-load of Chinese pirates!



They were scooped up in a net and put to work in the galley. They loved Ted's highly original cooking: Cantonese Congee; Szechwan Cabbage; Moo Goo Gai Pan with noodles; and Banshu Somen - cooked in a style unknown on the Chinese mainland.

One morning he added sleeping pills to their Egg Foo Yong breakfast, and left them stranded on a desert island. Then, he and Corny sailed the junk all the way to France, and hitchhiked to the outskirts of Paris.

There they met a friendly rat named Jacques.. He led them into the sewers of Paris, and thence to a spacious underground concrete island, directly under zxa famous restaurant, 'Gastronomie Pavillon de Maxime'.



Ted's 'travel kit' supplied everything needed to set up a tent, with comfortable sleeping bags. Then Jacques announced dinner. A convoy of rats brought them delicious warm foods, taken in bits and pieces from trays constantly replenished by the restaurant chefs.

A few days later, loaded with filet mignons, and crepes suzette dripping with orange-flavored liqueur, they followed Jacques through the tortuous sewer system, back to the city outskirts, where the kindly rat bid them a tearful Au Revoir.

Without further incident, they sailed the junk to North Carolina, chopped up most of it for firewood, but saved the teak-wood planking to build the raft on four oil drums, described earlier in this chapter.

"Mercy me!" cries Ed. "The man and Theodore are off somewhere - left me, Rusti, and Lady Chatelaine here by ourselves to guard the cabin, and now I think I see a ghost! No,

it's Jonathan Swift, who has visited here before. Hi, Jonathan. You're looking good - big as life and half as natural."

"That Rascal, that Knave, has the Moral Turpitude to claim me as his 'Mentor', " whisps Jon, "whilst his deceitful, miserable, inept Thoughts are given Life and spread like Dung, by this Devil-Machine Computer! Hath he no Shame? Look at him Lurking in the Scullery doing Woman's Work - COOKING! Before I get me hence, I must leave Notes to keep him from being a Compleet Dunce":

*Jonathan Swift's Directions to the Cook
(Modestly Proposed to help The Man)*

Never send up a Leg of a Fowl, while there is a Cat, or a Dog in the House that can be accused of running away with it. But if there happen to be neither you must lay it upon the rats, or a strange Greyhound. To keep troublesome Servants out of the kitchen, always leave the Winder sticking on the Jack to fall on their heads. If a Lump of Soot falls into the Soup, and you cannot conveniently get it out, stir it well in, and it will give the soup a high French Taste. If you are ordered to break the Claw of a Lobster or Crab, clap it between the Sides of the Dining Room Door between the hinges. You are not to wash your Hands til you have gone to the Necessary-house, and spitted your Meat, trussed your Fowl, picked your Salad; nor indeed til after you have sent up your second course; for your Hands will be ten times fouler with the many things you are forced to handle; but when your Work is over, one Washing will serve for All.

"Lookie here, Edward," says the man. "Looks as if I had a visitor whilst outside, 'waakin' th'dawg.' Oh, it was Jonathan with his usual smart-aleck advice. Let me see, at least I can use that soup flavoring idea, since there's plenty soot in my smoke stack."

"Come on," replies Ed. "It's time for you to tell the Gentle Readers the nitty gritty of YOUR cooking methods, now that Jon has described how it was done in the goode olde olde olde days. Go ahead, tell 'em, so we can turn out the lights and get some much needed sleep."

"My methods are simple, direct, and quickly told," unexpectedly complies the man.

"Basically, you need rather thick, even heating, non-stick cookware - frypan, soup pot, sauce pots, and cast iron stuff for the oven. Most things are stir-fried, cooked in water or steam, or baked. Cold-pressed olive oil is the fat used in small amounts in stir-frying, and even then, it's not heated directly, but mixed with the first combinations of cut-up vegetables before applying heat. If the fat is to be subjected to higher temperatures, as in pan frying, I limit the amount to what is required to coat the frypan, ie, a few grams of butter, or fat rendered from about 10 grams of chopped up salted fatback.

"Now that I have you riveted and breathlessly awaiting my sage and saffron remarks," continues the man, "I must explain why I think that *selection and handling of fats in cooking* is the most important thing I have to tell you. Let's call it my personal opinion, but an educated one, based on many years of reading about the chemistry and health

implications of fats and oils, and a number of years of applied research on antioxidants, oxidation and stability of fats, and other aspects of this complicated subject."

"Now he's gone and done it!" thinks Ed. "Even Hercules would blanch at being critical of what them fats and oils moguls put on the grocery shelf. What's that saying? 'Fowls rush in where Wildegeest fear to tread?'"

"Wrong, Ed. I wouldn't think of blaming anybody. After all, them guys hafta make a living in this uncaring world and what else are uninformed consumers good for(?), anyway(?). So all I can do is offer my conclusion that the wrong kinds of fats, the wrong cooking methods, and the over-consumption of fats may be the primary food-related health hazard (including cancer) facing populations all over the world," replies the man. "So I think the safest approach in cooking with fats is to limit them to cold-pressed olive oil, salted fatback, and butter. Here on the Island it's hard to get fresh (not rancid) salted fatback, because preservation is more assured if nitrites are added, but nitrites should not be part of the diet, especially in the presence of fish, which favors reactions that form carcinogenic nitrosamines."

"Hey Mr. Pristine," chides Ed. "Lately I've noticed you and Theodore eating slices of your home-made bread slathered with margarine. Aren't you breaking your own rules?"

"Just read the label, Ed," replies the man. "The margarine we are using doesn't contain hydrogenated fats (which I don't think should be consumed in any form), so I can assure you I am very selective in picking out a margarine for home use, and my surveillance involves careful reading of labels in the food stores, an activity that eliminates almost every processed food that contains fats, except sardines packed in soybean or cottonseed oil, and salmon, mackerel and sardines canned in saltwater.

"Theodore hasn't seemed to notice that our meat consumption has declined considerably," continues the man, "mostly because our bread machine, which uses a varied selection of ingredients, produces such appetizing eating. Ingredients include: brown rice flour; baker's yeast; buckwheat flour; buttermilk; caraway seeds; chick pea flour; corn meal; flax meal; gluten flour (80%); olive oil; rye flour; soya milk powder; soybean flour; sprouted wheat; sunflower seeds; unbleached wheat flour; wheat germ meal; whole wheat flour."

"That baked bread aroma makes my imaginary taste buds salivate," drools Ed. "What's for lunch?"



"Slabs of warm, freshly baked bread, slices of ripe tomato (from Sidney's garden in Rocky Harbour), slices of Skim Milk Cheese, tea with powdered skim milk," replies the man," and here's Theodore, head on my lap while I type, asking the same question.

"Yum, yum, yum," gurgles the talking while swallowing man. "I must say, we eat high up on the hawg, but with less emphasis on the fatty part, and more on the veggies from the organic gardens and greenhouses of our friends, Gary, George, Lisa, Luke, Mic, Sidney, and others. They rely heavily on compost, and on the kelp washed up on the beach this time of year, and produce enough for themselves and generous amounts for their friends. Then there are the berries, mostly growing wild, which they love to harvest; and the hunting and fishing."

HOME GROWN ORGANIC VEGETABLES
(Gardeners - Gary, George, Lisa, Mic, & Sidney)



MOOSE MEAT FOR SEVERAL FAMILIES
(Hunters - Todd and Ross)



CABIN-GROWN SPROUTS

(The man grows bean sprouts for salads; sprouted wheat for bread)

"I truly believe, the people who live on the Great Northern Peninsula (GNP) should be thinking about an infrastructure that retains and makes practical use of existing lifestyles, and proven capabilities," says the man. "The simplest approach would be to gradually

expand the outside gardening and greenhouse operations, and market the surpluses as organically produced vegetables worth twice the usual price.

"Well, Ed, I could go on and on, and spell out my dream for GNP, which assumes that if it could gain a reputation as a producer of pesticide-free natural foods, then all kinds of cottage industries would quickly follow, producing a wide range of prepared organic foods, based on fish and shellfish, vegetables, fruits and berries.

"As an additional bonus, local people would become more aggressive in protecting their 'native habitat,' these pristine surroundings, instead of giving in, and having it given, taken, stolen away. A pristine water resource, Gisborne Lake, in southern Newfoundland, is threatened by those in search of a quick buck," says the man. "Unfortunately a coke-fed society doesn't give a pure water drink a think, but an adequate intake of water each day should be high on the list of daily nutrient requirements. So I decided to enter the Gisborne Lake debate and suggest the implications for human health."

CBC-Radio Stations in Labrador & Newfoundland
(Commentary/Gisborne Lake 10-06-99)

This is another instance where natural resources, that are the birthright of citizens of this province, are being mishandled.

The media has performed a real service in making it possible for many people to express their concerns, and frequently their outrage, over the proposed raid on a pristine water resource.

I have been following the Gisborne Lake debate over the proposed bargain basement sale, removal, and export of huge quantities of water in seagoing tankers. Estimates of how many jobs this would create appear grossly overblown.

The Newfoundland government says the proposal has passed all provincial environmental regulations. But where is that report? Who has seen it?

I am unpleasantly reminded of other instances of mishandled public resources, including Churchill Falls and the way the earnings flow in a counter-current direction into another province. And the way privatization of provincial parks resulted in at least one park remaining closed for the entire tourist season.

There have been many thoughtful comments about the Gisborne Lake proposal. One suggestion has been about the need for an inventory of such resources on the entire Island.

This would require highly professional estimates of how much water can be removed without damage to fish and wildlife nursery areas and habitats, and to wetlands and waterways.

Through the entire debate, exporting bulk water and jobs have been the major issues. But I think there is another.

Many residents in this province currently receive drinking water that is of poor quality. Deer Lake, for example, has had a boil order for years, and other smaller communities sometimes face dark water running from their taps.

Canadian Nutrition Recommendations state that 'water is required for the transport of electrolytes and other nutrients, and is essential in metabolic reactions. It is responsible for temperature regulation, lubrication of joints, cushioning of the nervous system, and transmission of sound to the ear.'

It is important to drink 6 to 8 glasses of water per day. Coffee, tea, and especially sodas (which I chose to call "liquid candy") are not substitutes for water.

Lack of water reduces performance. Older people have decreased thirst and should pay attention to drinking more water.

If a trustworthy inventory of pristine water resources on the Island does indeed indicate some abundant supplies, then I suggest its primary use should be to safeguard and improve the health of Newfoundlanders.

Collection and delivery of pure water to needy communities would create more jobs and produce far more benefits to the infrastructure than would result from overseas shipments.

For commentary I'm Ted Miller.

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