

**The Rough Food Mystique:
The Evolution of Newfoundland Food Culture, 1945 – 1975**

by

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Abstract

The food culture of Newfoundland plays an important role in the daily life of its citizens. It helps instruct processes for celebrations, life cycle rituals and social gatherings. Food becomes imbued with a sense of culture and nationalistic pride. The foundations of Newfoundland's food culture were based on themes of preservation, adoption and adaptation. These themes, along with the food they created, carried through into the twentieth century. As social, economic and political changes altered the social structure and outlook for many Newfoundlanders after Confederation, many sought symbolic means to connect with an idealized past and romantic view of life. Newfoundland food culture solidified around foods of necessity to create traditions infused with patriotism and nostalgia.

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The phrase “we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us” certainly rings true. I am indebted to the many food and Newfoundland scholars who opened my eyes to avenues of study and intrigue I never thought imaginable. A special thank you to Professor Jeanette Neeson, who first introduced me to the possibility of using food as a lens to study history, and my thesis supervisor, Terry Bishop-Stirling, whose willingness to go with me on this journey and help rein in my many thoughts will be forever appreciated.

To my family. My mom for her countless hours of free childcare, endless words of encouragement and the meals that filled my childhood and make me feel at home wherever I am. My husband, Jay, you may never fully understand my incessant need for reading and writing, but I am grateful for your unconditional love and support to pursue my dreams. My daughter, Emerey, mommy is finally done “making words!” You are my sunshine and my greatest gift, I know you will do unbelievably wonderful things in your life and I’m so lucky to get to cheer you on. Always follow your dreams little one.

This work is dedicated to the memory of my dad, Norm. You left me too soon, but you left me with many important life lessons: to be proud of where I came from, the recipe for amazing doughboys and that no matter what happens in life, I can always go home. Your voice still echoes in my mind, your stubbornness beats in my heart and I will always be daddy’s girl.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Introduction – “We Are What We Eat”	1
Chapter 1 – “Where Once They Stood We Stand”	25
Chapter 2 – “Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary’s”	49
Chapter 3 – “There’s Gonna Be A Time Tonight”	74
Chapter 4 – “God Guard Thee Newfoundland”	94
Conclusion – “Salt Beef Junkie”	113
Bibliography	119

Introduction – “We Are What We Eat”

Food is the inescapable constant in every human’s life. It is the foundation of life itself, yet it transcends basic nutrition to be interwoven into religious, social and cultural experiences. As Carole M. Counihan explains, food is “an effective prism through which to illuminate human life.”¹ Researchers use food as an object of historical study to identify what people ate over time, but more importantly, to identify why. Food historians Gerard J. Fitzgerald and Gabriella M. Petrick explain:

...to understand a culture, past or present, we should endeavor to understand how a society feeds itself. It is the ubiquity and everydayness of eating that makes understanding it historically so important. The taste and flavour of food play an important part in social relationships, and a food’s taste can embody meanings well beyond what is put into the mouth.²

The island of Newfoundland³ presents an interesting case study in food history because food is as much ingrained into the imagination and tradition of its people⁴ as music, language and the fishery. Music and food, for example, often intersect to tell people’s stories, as illustrated in the famous lyrics of “The Kelligrew’s Soiree,” written by Johnny Burke:

There was birch rind, tar twine, cherry wine and turpentine,

¹ Carole M. Counihan, “Food and Gender: Identity and Power,” in *Food and Gender: Identity and Power*, eds. Carole M. Counihan and Steven L. Kaplan (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1998): 1.

² Gerard J. Fitzgerald and Gabriella M. Petrick, “In Good Taste: Rethinking American History with Our Palates,” *The Journal of American History* 95, no. 2 (2008): 393.

³ This study will be limited to the island portion of the province, and not include in-depth analysis on the food traditions of Labrador. This decision was based on size and scope of this project, as well as access to primary source materials. Furthermore, despite similarities to the island, Labrador’s unique development and food culture is worthy of its own focused study.

⁴ In addition to a focus on the island of Newfoundland, it is largely comprised of evidence relating to European (mainly of British, Irish and Scottish ancestry).

Jowls and cavalances, ginger beer and tea;
Pig's feet, cat's meat, dumplings boiled up in a sheet,
Dandelion and crackie's teeth at the Kelligrews Soiree...

There was boiled guineas, cold guineas, bullock's heads and
piccaninnies,
Everything to catch the pennies you'd break your sides to see;
Boiled duff, cold duff, apple jam was in a cuff,
I tell you, boys, we had enough at the Kelligrews Soiree.⁵

Despite significant research conducted on outport life, musical history and other cultural phenomenon, Newfoundland food traditions have lacked serious academic investigation. This is unfortunate as Newfoundland food traditions have survived for a long time, thereby presenting an outstanding opportunity to study these traditions as they have evolved. This work is an attempt to help fill this gap in the scholarship by identifying the cultural significance of food traditions of settlers on the island of Newfoundland and their development between 1945 and 1975.

This work focusses on the settler population in Newfoundland, those with primarily European ancestry. Indigenous peoples form an important part of Newfoundland's past and present. There are many similarities between the settlers and Indigenous uses of the land for food and how food was incorporated into celebrations and life cycle rituals. Many of the survival techniques employed by settlers were learned from the Indigenous populations. However, the differences between the development of the two cultures make a proper examination of Indigenous food culture beyond the scope of this study. Furthermore, any discussion

⁵ John Burke, "Kelligrew's Soiree," accessed September 9, 2018,
<https://www.mun.ca/folklore/leach/songs/NFLD1/3-05.htm#stay>.

of Indigenous people in Newfoundland must consider the long-term effects of colonialism and the history of trauma. In the case of the Beothuk peoples, for example, colonialism ultimately led to the destruction of culture. The use of food in everyday custom and ceremonial uses by Indigenous people is deserving of its own future study.

The period between 1945 and 1975 was a notably tumultuous time in Newfoundland's history. While there were many political and social changes, the foods of Newfoundland were also impacted by broader global trends in modernization, industrialization and rapid expansion in media and advertising. The foods of mainland Canada, the United States and broad global cuisine were all incorporated into the diets of many Newfoundlanders through the twentieth century. However, this process was not necessarily smooth or without conflict. Confederation, provincial economic and political policies as well as social trends like second-wave feminism, all brought about cultural and social reactions. Food culture, like responses in the art and music scene, reflected a perceived attack on traditional culture and a resistance to modernity. This thesis posits that as a result of these changes Newfoundland food traditions solidified around an historical and nostalgic understanding of the foods of necessity associated with the past to create a "rough food mystique."

Food Historiography

As a field of study, food history, according to Peter Scholliers and Kyri Claflin, is “a source of knowledge about how and why food, cultures, and societies have changed over time.”⁶ The roots of studying food trace a similar trajectory as broader social history. Scholars at the *Annales* school in France began to look at food through studies of consumption, nutrition and dietetics in the 1960s.⁷ Following in the footsteps of E. P. Thompson, historians began to explore previously overlooked subjects, including women, the working class and the poor, and turned to food as a way to explore social and cultural trends. Social historians learned that concepts like class and gender could be studied through what people ate, when and how. This early work owed a debt to pioneering food and cultural studies authored by anthropologists and sociologists.⁸ One such example is social anthropologist Jack Goody’s *Cooking Cuisine and Class*, published in 1982. It remains a standard text in exploring the role of food in determining social meaning. Goody’s work centres on African and Eurasian societies in which he explores cuisines in their “hierarchical, regional and temporal variations.”⁹

⁶ Peter Scholliers and Kyri W. Claflin, “Introduction: Surveying Global Food Historiography,” in *Writing Food History: A Global Perspective*, eds. Peter Scholliers and Kyri W. Claflin (London: Berg Publishers, 2012), 1.

⁷ Scholliers and Claflin, “Introduction,” 3.

⁸ Foundational texts from anthropology and sociology include *Sweetness and Power* (1986) by Sidney Mintz; *Purity and Danger* (1966) by Margaret Douglas and *All Manners of Food* (1985) by Stephen Menell.

⁹ Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 2.

Following a slow start, food history has gained traction in the past two decades with the introduction of journals, conferences and an influx of food related texts.¹⁰ The study of food remains an interdisciplinary field with the incorporation of research from biology, nutrition¹¹, environmentalism¹², sociology, economics and politics. Food serves as an object of study that links culture and social traditions with broader historical knowledge. As John Super writes, food is “the ideal cultural symbol that allows historians to uncover hidden levels of meaning in social relationships and arrive at new understandings of the human experience.”¹³ Mary A. Procida argues that food studies began to link the “trivial” issues related to food with “themes of acknowledged historical import” including nationalism, economics and modernity.¹⁴ Such studies solidified the importance of food in historical inquiry. In the words of Jeffrey M. Pilcher, research into food brought “the mental, discursive worlds of cultural history together with a material, embodied understanding of the past.”¹⁵ Food studies bridged the gap between popular culture and academia.

Newfoundland’s food culture was and is a part of a larger Western society, greatly influenced by traditions and developments in Great Britain, Europe and

¹⁰ Two broad compilations which are not covered in depth in this paper but provide solid introductory information are *The Oxford Companion to Food* by Alan Davidson and *The Cambridge World History of Food* edited by Kenneth F. Kiple and Kriemhild Cornee Ornelas.

¹¹ For an excellent summary, see Alice Ross, “Health and Diet in 19th-century America: A Food Historian’s Point of View,” *Historical Archaeology* 27, no. 2 (1993).

¹² One of the important texts linking food and environment is Alfred W. Crosby’s *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (1972). It has not been included in this paper as my interests lie outside of bio-determinism.

¹³ John C. Super, “Food History,” *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 1 (2002): 165.

¹⁴ Mary A. Procida, “No Longer Half-Baked: Food Studies and Women’s History,” *Journal of Women’s History* 16, no. 3 (2004): 199.

¹⁵ Jeffrey M. Pilcher, “The Embodied Imagination in Recent Writings on Food History,” *American Historical Review* 121, no. 3 (2016): 861.

North America. In her review of food studies and women's history, Procida noted that "food production, preparation, marketing, and consumption are intimately connected with modern and postmodern trends such as industrialization, the rise of mass media, imperialism, economic globalization, multiculturalism, and, not least, the changing position of women."¹⁶ Modernization in particular plays a crucial role in the development of food trends over time. The modernization of food itself - through the development and proliferation of convenience foods - as well as the modernization of production, transportation, preservation and marketing techniques has greatly impacted global food systems. In quantity alone, the volume of foodstuffs available to North American consumers by the end of the nineteenth century "outstripped all previous supply systems in history."¹⁷ By the middle of the twentieth century, food products and knowledge crisscrossed the globe, linking people and food cultures in previously unknown ways.

Jean-Louis Flandrin, an authority on food history, points to the food-processing industry as one of the most notable impacts of the Industrial Revolution. Common foods of today like baker's chocolate and condensed milk did not exist prior to the 1850s.¹⁸ At the same time, other foods like butter and cheese moved from small artisanal shops to mass factory production.¹⁹ The American Midwest slaughterhouse is a vivid example of the change in food production. Instead of

¹⁶ Procida, "No Longer Half-Baked," 197.

¹⁷ Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *Food in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2006): 56.

¹⁸ Jean-Louis Flandrin, "Introduction: From Industrial Revolution to Industrial Food," in *Food: A Culinary History*, eds. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013): 387.

¹⁹ Flandrin, "From Industrial Revolution to Industrial Food," 387.

butchers working in small, family owned shops where customers ordered and often witnessed the preparation of their meat, animals became a part of a mechanized process utilizing the labour of hundreds of men and machines to butcher, package and ship to distant consumers.²⁰ Upton Sinclair's sensational 1906 book, *The Jungle*, brought to the public's attention the very real changes occurring in their food supply. Consumers were no longer intimately connected to the origins of their food. Butchery is only one example; changes were spread across most areas of food production. Advances in milling, like increased mill size and the use of steam-driven machinery, for example, increased the amount of flour produced. At the same time, efforts were made to mechanize the kneading process, and the use of industrial ovens with hot air instead of solid fuels increased the amount of bread that could be made in a shorter period of time.²¹ Bread making was thus moved from a strictly home-based activity to one that could be done in larger bakeries on an industrial scale. The industrialization of bread making allowed for more refined flours and grains, thereby transforming the diet of the working class to a greater reliance on processed white breads. Industrial changes modernized the way food was produced as well as how food was viewed for health and aesthetics.

The growing food industry spurred marketing agencies to sell these new modern products to consumers. The success of Jell-O, for example, has been

²⁰ Pilcher, *Food in World History*, 51.

²¹ Giorgio Pedrocchi, "The Food Industry and New Preservation Techniques," in *Food: A Culinary History*, eds. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013): 431.

attributed to “its emotional connotations” ascribed through marketing campaigns; rather than its cost, ease of use or even taste.²² By invoking concepts of purity and domesticity, manufacturers like Kraft, General Mills and others advanced the middle-class ideal during the twentieth century by promising that their products would make women better wives and mothers.²³ Researchers have linked this process to soda, cereal and even some vegetables.²⁴ Canned foods are an example of the joint efforts between manufacturers and marketers to change consumer preferences. In France, canned foods were initially rejected by consumers who preferred fresh meat and vegetables. However, after years of intense marketing, educational classes for women on the benefits of canning and the military’s ability to “inculcate a taste for canned food” among men, canned foods gained widespread acceptance.²⁵

Modernization of food supplies and the attempts to alter traditions were not always readily accepted by consumers. The trade of food across the globe offered many the opportunity to access more variety and to expand diets. However, scholars have acknowledged that when people believe traditions are being lost there is a powerful response in the need to maintain local food heritage and ingredients. Without doubt there was a desire to preserve authentic food culture in most communities and social groups. Flandrin and Montanari argue that despite the

²² Sarah E. Newton, “The Jell-O Syndrome: Investigating Popular Culture/Foodways,” *Western Folklore* 51, no. 3/4 (1992): 251.

²³ *Ibid.*, 252.

²⁴ See Gerard J. Fitzgerald and Gabriella M. Petrick, “In Good Taste: Rethinking American History with our Palates,” *The Journal of American History* 95, no. 2 (2008).

²⁵ Pilcher, *Food in World History*, 60.

continuing globalization of food, regional variance has and will continue. They contend that the push toward homogeneous behaviour tends to cause a reaction of strong attachment to local identity that results in a “frenetic, often chaotic quest to preserve local traditions.”²⁶ Food historians have traced this response in several societies.

In his post-colonial look at Mexican food, Jeffrey M. Pilcher argued that resistance to change in food traditions was a leading factor in the development of Mexican cuisine. Pilcher highlighted the clear distinction made between Native American ‘corn eaters’ and European ‘wheat eaters’ which signified the Spanish colonial period.²⁷ These food divisions carried through after independence as distinct culinary traditions were formulated and formalized. Pilcher contends that “indigenous nationalism” was the driving force behind the enshrinement of foods like enchiladas and tamales as part of the national cuisine of Mexico.²⁸ Even as the majority of populations began to regularly consume the new “modern” food products, there were people in nearly every corner of the globe who reacted to the modernization of local traditional food systems.²⁹ In the southern United States, for example, many people continued to use stone-ground grits as a daily staple instead

²⁶ Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari, “Conclusion: Today and Tomorrow,” in *Food: A Culinary History*, eds. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013): 491.

²⁷ Jeffrey M. Pilcher, “Tamales or Timbales: Cuisine and the Formation of Mexican National Identity 1821-1911,” *The Americas* 53, no. 2 (1996): 194.

²⁸ Pilcher, *Food in World History*, 67.

²⁹ For examples, see Arjun Appadurai, “How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, no. 1 (1988); Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *Food in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2006); *Food: A Culinary History*, eds. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

of the cold cereals becoming popular in supermarkets.³⁰ Broadly speaking, in reaction to modernization, some people began to place particular value on peasant eating habits over more elite, more industrialized food trends.³¹ By studying these changes in food history, we can identify changes in social structures and what people value over time. In the words of Carole Counihan, food becomes an “effective prism through which to illuminate human life” both globally and regionally.³²

Newfoundland Food Historiography

Much of Newfoundland’s history has been written from an economic and political standpoint. This reflected broader trends in the field as well as the interests of the researchers themselves. The work of pioneers in Newfoundland history like Shannon Ryan, Peter Neary and Keith Matthews remain valuable and offer a foundation for future avenues of study. In the 1970s new areas of research opened up including historical geography, maritime studies and anthropology.³³ At the same time, under the encouragement of historians like Peter Pope, aspects of social and cultural history took hold amongst researchers in Newfoundland. Jeff Webb’s 2016 book, *Observing the Outports*, summarizes the attempts by academics at Memorial University department to study and document Newfoundland culture between 1950 and 1980. As Webb noted, the products of these studies laid the foundation for

³⁰ Pilcher, *Food in World History*, 59.

³¹ Flandrin, “From Industrial Revolution to Industrial Food,” 391.

³² Counihan, “Food and Gender,” 1.

³³ Jerry Bannister, “Making History: Cultural Memory in Twentieth-Century Newfoundland,” *Newfoundland Studies* 18, no. 2 (2002): 181.

future research, but they were also a product of their time.³⁴ Given that the historical tradition in Newfoundland tended to focus on the theme of struggle and conflict³⁵, it is not surprising that Newfoundland food has been written about primarily in the context of survival and subsistence.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, ethnographer John T. Omohundro studied the subsistence food practices in the communities of Main Brook and Conche on the Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. Omohundro highlighted the effects of modernization, specifically in road construction and industry, including the growth and decline in forestry, on food access and choice for communities. His work, *Rough Food: The Seasons of Subsistence in Northern Newfoundland*, argued that increasing access to convenience foods, freezers for storage of store-bought foodstuffs and road developments decreased the use of home-based food production.³⁶ He pointed out that demographic changes impacted the sharing of knowledge and led to a decline in skill and food preparation techniques, including hunting and gardening.³⁷ However, Omohundro maintained that certain traditional methods were alive and well in some areas, including the proliferation of potato gardens.³⁸

Omohundro's work supported the findings of Hilda Chaulk Murray's 1979 book *More than Fifty Percent: Woman's life in a Newfoundland Outport, 1900-1950*.

³⁴ Jeff Webb, *Observing the Outports: Describing Newfoundland Culture, 1950-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016): 25.

³⁵ Bannister, "Making History," 175; see also, Keith Matthews, "Historical Fence Building: A Critique of the Historiography of Newfoundland," *Newfoundland Studies* 17, no. 2 (2001) (reprint).

³⁶ John T. Omohundro, *Rough Food: The Seasons of Subsistence in Northern Newfoundland* (St. John's, NL: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1994): 74, 122.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

Deeply influenced by her folklore studies and experience as a teacher, Murray explored the role of women in outport culture and life, including the fishery and agriculture, in Elliston, located on the Bonavista Peninsula. Referencing the importance of food in social relationships, Murray admits that she came from a home in which “no traveller, friend or stranger, was permitted to leave without a meal - a cup of tea, if he’d have no more.”³⁹ While Murray refers to several forms of culturally infused foodstuffs, like a groaning cake⁴⁰, the focus of her study was on women’s contributions to family and economic life overall, and therefore she did not dwell on the cultural role of food. Similarly, Willeen Keough’s in-depth look at Irish women on the Southern Shore also touched on early food traditions in Newfoundland from an economic and subsistence viewpoint. In *The Slender Thread*, Keough acknowledged that women were integral to food production for their families and argued that women also used food in trade and for settling merchant accounts.⁴¹ Both Murray and Keough have made significant contributions to understanding the social and cultural development of Newfoundland, and attribute to women the role of gatekeepers of tradition, including food traditions.

Omohundro, Murray and Keough have all made considerable impacts on Newfoundland historiography, but their focus was not on the particular social significance of Newfoundland food. Returning to the influential work of Peter Pope,

³⁹ Hilda Chaulk Murray, *More Than Fifty Percent: Woman’s Life in a Newfoundland Outport 1900-1950* (St. John’s, NL: Breakwater Books, 1979): ix.

⁴⁰ A groaning cake is a “sweet-cake served in the house of woman who has given birth.” *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, 2nd ed.

⁴¹ Willeen Keough, *The Slender Thread: Irish Women on the Southern Avalon, 1750-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008): 102, 116-117.

we find some of the first connections between the use of food and alcohol for social purposes. In his 1989 article, "Historical Archaeology and the Demand for Alcohol in 17th Century Newfoundland," Pope offered a new look at consumption patterns of early settlers. More than an economic transaction, alcohol was often used as a status symbol and the sharing of a drink was an expression of a social contract. As Pope argued, alcohol (and by extension, other consumer goods like tobacco) were the "cultural face of the credit system" in early settlements like Ferryland.⁴² This theme was expanded and developed in his broader work *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* which serves as a foundational text for Newfoundland scholars. More recently, *Resetting the Kitchen Table: Food Security, Culture, Health and Resilience in Coastal Communities*, edited by Christopher C. Parrish is a collection of essays which examines the interaction between people and food on Canada's Pacific and Atlantic coasts. This work reflects a shift in academia to look at food as cultural and social product. The works by Rosemary Ommer and Linde Kealey, in particular, draw attention to the ongoing importance of the informal economy (for example, hunting wild game and picking berries) in providing sustenance, but also the continuation of cultural expression.⁴³ This work is critical in

⁴² Peter Pope, "Historical Archaeology and the Demand for Alcohol in 17th Century Newfoundland," *Acadiensis* 19, no. 1 (1989): 90.

⁴³ Please see Rosemary E. Ommer, et al., "Food Security and the Informal Economy," in *Resetting the Kitchen Table: Food Security, Culture, Health and Resilience in Coastal Communities*, 115-127, ed. Christopher C. Parrish, et al. (Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2006) ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.qe2a-proxy.mun.ca/lib/mun/detail.action?docID=3022163>. And Linda Kealey, "Historical Perspectives on Nutrition and Food Security in Newfoundland and Labrador," in *Resetting the Kitchen Table: Food Security, Culture, Health and Resilience in Coastal Communities*, 177-190, ed. Christopher C. Parrish, et

highlighting the interconnectedness and multidisciplinary nature of food studies as it incorporates work from nursing, history, environmental studies and economics.

Folklorists have also contributed to an overall understanding of Newfoundland food culture. The most comprehensive attempt at examining traditional foodways came from a 1977 Master's thesis by Pamela Gray entitled "Traditional Newfoundland Foodways: Origin, Adaptation and Change." While providing details on native plants and animals and supporting the importance of foodways to culture, there are several drawbacks to Gray's work. The most significant challenge is that her conclusions were based on results from interviews with 14 individuals living in a specific St. John's neighbourhood and an additional 55 questionnaires from Memorial University students and employees. Gray herself had only been living in the province for four months prior to beginning her research, with a base only in St. John's. Gray's work offers a good starting point, but her results are reflective of a small sampling and may not capture the nuances and variety of the island's traditions. Moreover, some of her conclusions - including high illiteracy rates among outport people which reduced the sharing of food knowledge to only oral transmission - are readily contradicted by cookbook and archival evidence.

Diane Tye, folklore professor at Memorial University of Newfoundland, with a particular interest in food-related research, provides a more recent example of the cultural importance of bread in Newfoundland. In "Bread for the Road: Intersections

al. (Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2006) ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.qe2a-proxy.mun.ca/lib/mun/detail.action?docID=3022163>.

of Food and Culture in Newfoundland and Labrador,” Tye argues that more so than fish, bread “sustained and shaped men’s and women’s labour, helped define gender, contributed to physical and psychological well-being, and now represents a marker of cultural loss.”⁴⁴ With a focus on one food item, Tye did not explore the interconnectedness of ingredients to one another and to broad cultural trends, but she acknowledged the importance of food to communities and individuals above and beyond subsistence. Picking up the threads of these previous scholars, this thesis attempts to trace early food customs to the twentieth century to provide an understanding of why certain food practices and traditions were continued past the point of necessity and subsistence.

Thesis Context

The history of Newfoundland has often been written as the “story of settlement against all obstacles and survival against all odds.”⁴⁵ Regardless of the debates regarding settlement, it is largely accepted that by the eighteenth century, permanent settlement in Newfoundland was unavoidable and unstoppable. The American Revolution and Napoleonic Wars sped up the existing changes occurring in the fishery as it moved from a migratory based system to resident-based

⁴⁴ Diane Tye, “Bread for the Road: Intersections of Food and Culture in Newfoundland and Labrador,” *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 26, no. 2 (2011): 175.

⁴⁵ Pat Byrne, “Booze, Ritual, and the Invention of Tradition: The Phenomenon of the Newfoundland Screech-In,” in *Usable Pasts: Traditions and Group Expressions in North America*, ed. Tad Tuleja (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1997): 233.

economy.⁴⁶ These changes in the fishery coincided with an influx of immigrants, especially women, which changed the dynamics of communities and increased the population of the island. In the span of fifteen years, from 1801 to 1815, the population increased from 14,128 to 40,568.⁴⁷ Sir Richard Bonnycastle, an officer in the British army who wrote extensively on Canada and Newfoundland, observed in 1842 that “from having been a mere mercantile depot, [Newfoundland] now bids fair to take its rank amongst the more flourishing colonies of the neighbouring continent.”⁴⁸ While it may have been fish that led most people to the island, these early settlers realized quickly that fish could not supply all of their food needs. Ingenuity, resiliency and creativity allowed the first settler families to carve out a food culture rooted in survival and necessity but imbued with social and cultural significance.

A large portion of a family’s food supply in the 18th and 19th centuries was imported to the island. Import records indicate that the majority of food staples, including flour, butter, pork and potatoes came to Newfoundland from Britain, Ireland and the United States.⁴⁹ Newfoundland was strategically poised to benefit from an expanding Atlantic trade network, which provided residents with a surprisingly wide array of variety in food items such as molasses, rum, corn and

⁴⁶ For a full discussion on this transition see Shannon Ryan, “Fishery to Colony: A Newfoundland Watershed, 1793-1815,” *Acadiensis* 12, no. 2 (1983): 35-36.

⁴⁷ Shannon Ryan, *A History of Newfoundland in the North Atlantic to 1818* (St. John’s, NL: Flanker Press, 2012): 224.

⁴⁸ Sir Richard Bonnycastle, *Newfoundland in 1842: A Sequel to “the Canadas in 1841,”* vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1842): 5.

⁴⁹ CO 194, vol. 43, B-680, ff. 282-288v, March, 1803.

“Fruit from the Azores.”⁵⁰ Despite this advantage, imported food supplies were susceptible to market fluctuations and disruptions triggered by weather and international conflicts. Residents were often left vulnerable to high prices, food shortages and at times, starvation.

To offset these risks, residents undoubtedly also relied on the wildlife, fish and vegetation native to the island to contribute to food supplies. Writing in 1842, Sir Richard Bonnycastle extolled the wild bounty available in Newfoundland:

Nature, in her wonderful adaptations of means to an end, has placed in the cold, desolate, and stormy regions of the north, an inexhaustible supply of riches, vastly superior, in consequence of their efforts upon man, to the pearls, diamonds, and precious stones of the Eastern and warm countries of the globe.⁵¹

By-products of the cod fishery most certainly contributed to settlers’ diets, along with shellfish and freshwater species, like trout. Settlers hunted land mammals, like hare and deer which, along with a multitude of seabirds, served as important protein sources. Berries, herbs and local flora were abundant and used in season or preserved for winter months.⁵² Most modern historians agree that much of the island was and is unsuited for large-scale, commercial agricultural pursuits.⁵³

⁵⁰ CO 194, vol. 48, B-682, ff. 23-24, July 19, 1809. For further information and statistics related to trade with Europe, the West Indies and South America see Shannon Ryan, “The Newfoundland Salt Cod Trade in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Newfoundland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: essays in interpretation*, eds. James Hiller and Peter Neary, 40-66 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

⁵¹ Sir Richard Bonnycastle, *Newfoundland in 1842*, vol. 1, 258.

⁵² For detailed lists and descriptions of available food sources refer to Sean Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017): 8-10; Pamela Gray, “Traditional Newfoundland Foodways: Origin, Adaptation and Change,” (Master’s thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977): 8-9.

⁵³ Sean Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017): 7; see also, Robert Mackinnon, “Farming the Rock: The Evolution of Commercial Agriculture around St. John’s, Newfoundland, to 1945,” *Acadiensis* 20, no. 2 (1991).

However, small-scale and family farming formed an integral part of supplementing meagre food supplies. By the nineteenth century household gardens were producing potatoes, cabbage, cucumbers, cauliflower, beet, lettuces, parsnips, carrots, peas, spinach and varieties of beans. The first census in 1836 noted that there were over 350 farms around St. John's which included 3,500 acres being cultivated out of the 9,000 acres total.⁵⁴ Court records provide numerous examples of disputes between neighbours, which often turned violent, over intrusion into another's garden (oft times by a roaming pig) or perceived theft demonstrating the importance people placed on their family gardens.⁵⁵

These early foodways laid the foundation for centuries of food tradition in Newfoundland. The origins of dishes equated with Newfoundland food culture, like fish and brewis, Jiggs (boiled) dinner, duff, flipper pie and many jams and preserves came from this early combination of local and imported foods and food knowledge. As the twentieth century approached and progressed through two World Wars, Newfoundlanders were brought closer to their North American neighbours and a wide range of social, economic and political influences. Traditional trade routes were altered by the wars and by Confederation with Canada. Modernization and developments in transportation and communication meant less isolation among communities and greater access to print media, advertising, television and radio.

⁵⁴ Mackinnon, "Farming the Rock," 43.

⁵⁵ PANL, GN 5/2/C/1, Box 1, 317-318, *Mary McMahon v. John Quilty*, 8 October 1833; See also Willeen Keough, *The Slender Thread: Irish Women on the Southern Avalon, 1750-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

Changes to the fishery as the main economy and attempts to industrialize the island increased labour opportunities for both men and women. These efforts, however, did not prevent the emigration of many Newfoundlanders to mainland Canada for work. At the same time, post-Confederation developments, including the policies of the Smallwood government like resettlement, federal social welfare programmes, like family allowance and old age pension, and greater access to North American products and advertising, raised concerns about changes to Newfoundland culture.

In 1976, journalist Sandra Gwyn published an article in *Saturday Night* magazine entitled “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” in which she described a movement led by actors, musicians and artists to recapture what was perceived as a loss of Newfoundland culture.⁵⁶ Artists and other commentators felt “true” Newfoundland could be found in the outports and the long-standing traditions of the island. Since Gwyn’s article first appeared, other writers have picked up the theme of cultural and nativist movements in Newfoundland. James Overton, for example, summarizes the movement thusly:

The cultural revival in Newfoundland is largely a phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s, even though its roots and antecedents can be traced back to earlier periods. The movement has been, to a large extent, the creation of the intelligentsia that has emerged in Newfoundland in the post-Confederation period, the urban, educated and relatively affluent strata of the population...Within the broad movement there are many strands of thinking and activity, and a variety of individuals and institutions have played key roles in both facilitating and shaping the revival and its ideology.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Sandra Gwyn, “The Newfoundland Renaissance,” *Saturday Night* 91, no. 2 (1976): 38-45.

⁵⁷ James Overton, “A Newfoundland Culture?” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 23, no. 1 & 2 (1988): 7.

To date, the majority of literature on the “renaissance” has focused on the music and arts communities. In 1988 Gerald L. Pocius, for example, argued that the popularity of Simani’s “The Mummer’s Song,” has less to do with its musical attributes than as an emblem of the nativist movement. He noted that the mummering tradition was a “powerful identity symbol of cultural revival” that expressed a certain uniqueness and connection with the past.⁵⁸ Mekaela Gulliver further expanded on the impact of nativist movements within Newfoundland’s art, music and theatre groups in her 2014 doctoral dissertation. Gulliver argued that the artists involved in the movement reacted against what they perceived as a loss of Newfoundland culture. She noted, however, that this phenomenon was not limited to Newfoundland but reflected wider social, political and cultural movements in North America and Britain during the 1960s and 1970s.⁵⁹ Gulliver’s work is in-depth and acknowledges the themes of nostalgia, grief, loss and celebration which created various cultural symbols. Her focus is limited to the different arts communities in St. John’s, however, and does not explore developments and reactions in communities outside of the St. John’s area. Her work remains important for this study as it provides an overview into what many may have been feeling regarding modernization and the changes to Newfoundland culture post-Confederation.

⁵⁸ Gerald L. Pocius, “The Mummies Song in Newfoundland: Intellectuals, Revivalists and Cultural Nativism,” *Newfoundland Studies* 4, no. 1 (1988): 57.

⁵⁹ Mekaela Gulliver, “Preserving the Best: Newfoundland’s Cultural Movement, 1965-1983.” (PhD diss., Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2014): 2-3.

The goal of this thesis is to expand on the existing body of knowledge to include an often less studied aspect of material cultural – food. Food in Newfoundland is a significant social and cultural symbol affecting communities, families and individuals across the province. The trajectory of this research is both chronological and thematic. Chapter 1 will provide a working definition of food culture and its connection to broader consumer culture. This definition will permit a discussion on the development of Newfoundland food culture and the historical roots of particularly important food items. Chapter 2 will look at the tension between modernization and tradition which many Newfoundlanders wrestled with in the period after Confederation. The discussion will centre on how this struggle between the new and the old ways affected food choices and their meaning. Chapter 3 identifies the tension between proscriptive food knowledge found in cookbooks and media sources, and food knowledge in homes. This will include the distinction between the “grand” food associated with social gathering as a status marker and the “rough” food meant for families. Finally, chapter 4 will explore the idea of the “rough food mystique” and how particular foods no longer needed out of necessity became imbued with cultural significance by the 1970s. Their continued use and preparation speak to a reclaiming of culture, which surpasses any nutritional or even aesthetic value.

Sources

The sources used for this research are varied and reflect a “bottom up” approach to historical research. The foundation for this project are community cookbooks ranging from 1900 to 1980 from across the province. Cookbooks are useful sources in food history as they can highlight trends in tastes, ingredients and instructions. A random sample was chosen from the Centre for Newfoundland Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland and from personal collections. Most of the cookbooks are produced by church groups or community social groups. Despite the historical divides in Newfoundland regarding religion, these cookbooks are not reflective of religious infused doctrine regarding food. The evidence suggests that certain holy occasions may have necessitated different food habits based on religion, but the daily fare of most families was likely similar and reflected geographic influences versus religious ones. The cookbooks consulted were in no way an exhaustive list. They are meant to provide an overview and show continuity of recipes and advertising during the study period.

Secondly, memoir literature plays an important role in supplementing the cookbook evidence. There are noted concerns with memory and with the objective nature of memoirs, they are used here as first-hand accounts of people’s experience with food during their life time. While there is some ‘poetic license’ afforded to these writers: their memories and recollections provide insight regarding food traditions and permit a glimpse into daily life. Furthermore, this body of works correlate and

support the information found in cookbooks, archival records and historical documents.

The use of periodicals, archival documents and published manuscripts supplement the main sources. The nineteenth century sources reflect particular colonial and imperial British ideals and persuasive writing. They are nonetheless useful in identifying early food and hospitality trends and represent an outsider view of Newfoundland. This accumulation of sources represents the challenges of food history studies – there are few sources dedicated to the topic, unlike politics or economics, and therefore evidence needs to be pieced together in an attempt to identify similarities and anomalies. While the intent of this paper is to look at trends across the province, it is noted that a large portion of the source material is from the Central, East and Avalon Peninsula. While the west and south coasts varied in some areas of development, and included a significant French influence, the overall trends discussed in this study appear throughout the province as there is more assimilation by the mid-twentieth century.

Food traditions in Newfoundland are rooted in nationalism, patriotism and nostalgia. The creation of a ‘national’ food of Newfoundland had to be “imagined from diverse local foods,” as a rejection of the symbolic ‘Other.’⁶⁰ Food did not escape the impact of cultural nativism. The response of many Newfoundlanders to the multitude of changes they witnessed between 1945 and 1970 was to cling to and

⁶⁰ Pilcher, *Food in World History*, 64.

codify what they considered to be traditional aspects of the island's food culture.

This resulted in the "rough food mystique" in which the foods formerly used out of necessity took on cultural importance to be identified as something uniquely Newfoundland.

Chapter 1 : Where Once They Stood We Stand

The importance of food in cultural and community development has been under studied by many historians. This lack of focus has resulted in reducing food's role in society to subsistence and as a commodity. However, food is vastly more important to human development than as simple nourishment. Counihan elaborates: "food is a prism that absorbs a host of assorted cultural phenomena and unites them into one coherent domain while simultaneously speaking through that domain about everything that is important."¹ Broadly speaking, Counihan notes that food culture constitutes an "organized system, a language which - through its structure and components - conveys meaning and contributes to the organization of the natural and social world."² Food culture is not solely the food eaten, but how it is produced, prepared and served. It also includes how food is sold, distributed and how food is used in celebration. Food culture encompasses how food knowledge and language are created and passed through generations. Language and the common words associated with foods and eating are a particular way in which traditions are formed and maintained. The *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, for example, lists over 150 terms directly related to food and eating. This list includes words unique to the

¹ Carole Counihan, "The Social and Cultural Uses of Food," in *Cambridge World History of Food*, eds. Kenneth F. Kiple and Kriemhild Conee Ornelas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521402149>

² Counihan, "The Social and Cultural Uses of Food," <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521402149>

island's food culture like baker's fog,³ gut-foundered,⁴ and scoff.⁵ The use and commonality of these words speaks to a shared food language among Newfoundlanders and helps define an "insider" from an "outsider."

The relationships people form with food reflect and shape social meaning. The sharing of food ensures the survival of a group both socially and materially.⁶ Food cultures are created from varied sources and demonstrate elasticity over time as societies develop and change. One of the tensions in food history studies is between whether people eat the same foods over and over or whether people incorporate new foods into their diets and traditions.⁷ In some instances, regional or ethnic traditions will supersede a unified national food culture, while in other cases, a national cuisine does not seek to hide its regional or ethnic roots.⁸ In the early 1970s, folklorist Don Yoder provided a useful definition of food cultures, or "folk cookery." He summarized:

...traditional domestic cookery marked by regional variation...includes the study of the foods themselves, their morphology, their preparation, their preservation, their social and psychological functions, and their ramifications into all other aspects of folk culture.⁹

³ "disparaging term for commercially prepared bread," *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, 2nd ed.

⁴ "very hungry, famished," *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, 2nd ed.

⁵ "a cooked meal at sea or ashore, esp at night and often part of an impromptu party," *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, 2nd ed.

⁶ Counihan, "The Social and Cultural Uses of Food," <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521402149>

⁷ Fitzgerald and Petrick, "In Good Taste," 395.

⁸ Arjun Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30, no. 1 (1988): 5.

⁹ Don Yoder, "Folk Cookery," in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* ed. Richard Dorson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972): 325.

Traditional foods are created through socially constructed values and identity.

Borrowing from Eric Hobsbawm's theory of invented traditions, food cultures can take on elements of historical embellishment while maintaining a sense of connection with the past. For the purposes of this paper, tradition is defined by Hobsbawm as:

a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviours by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.¹⁰

The historical past in Newfoundland includes influences from a variety of peoples and cultures. The roots of Newfoundland's food culture are summarized by folklorist

Holly Everett in the following:

Traditional foodways developed from regional adaptations of English, Irish, and Scottish culinary practices, with the important addition of indigenous flora, fauna, and *fruits de mer*...there is also an Acadian influence...In addition, the province is home to four native peoples, including the Mi'kmaq of Newfoundland and the Inuit, Innu and Métis of Labrador.¹¹

In order to fully appreciate these diverse influences, it is necessary to dissect this definition into its individual parts.

Newfoundland settler food culture developed from three overarching strands of food-related experiences and trends. The first is what early settlers, primarily

¹⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 2.

¹¹ Holly Everett, "Vernacular Health Moralities and Culinary Tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador," *The Journal of American Folklore* 122, no. 483 (2009): 34.

from Britain, Ireland and Scotland, brought with them to Newfoundland. The second are the ingredients existing locally and native to the island which were adopted by settlers. This also includes established practices by Aboriginal peoples which were adopted by Europeans. And, finally, food culture includes the knowledge and foods which were created anew or adapted by settlers to suit the lifestyle of the island. Each process influenced how food culture developed in Newfoundland communities and how subsequent generations would come to define traditional Newfoundland food. To assist in tracing the developments through time, I have opted to isolate ingredients as objects of study for each strand of development. These products - namely, bread forms, berries and wild game - permit an examination of the three areas of development and show the progression of dishes over time. This method permits close examination of the meaning applied to each ingredient in the food culture and provides a foundation to determine how foods once considered a necessity were transformed into meaningful symbols of culture. They demonstrate that it is not necessarily the origin of a particular foodstuff that is most important, but instead the end products which are created and how they are incorporated into beliefs and practices.¹²

Brought From Away - Bread

The majority of early settlers to Newfoundland came from England, Ireland and Scotland, particularly the counties associated with the migratory fishery. With

¹² Everett, "Vernacular Health Moralities and Culinary Tourism," 36.

them they brought long-established European food ideologies, recipes and cooking methods. One of these was the primacy of bread and flour-based food items. In the 18th century, grains accounted for one-half to three-quarters of people's daily caloric intake in most European countries.¹³ In Britain during this period, a farm labourer, married with four children, would consume in a typical week 8 loaves of bread, 2 pounds of cheese, 2 pounds of butter, 2 ounces of tea, a half-pound of boiled bacon, and 2 pints of milk.¹⁴ This diet cost approximately £52 annually.¹⁵ Overall, diets were fairly monotonous. Most people survived on "grain in the form of bread, brown rather than white, or flatcakes."¹⁶ Through industrialization, white bread became more common, ultimately replacing brown bread, and came to dominate diets across the sea.

Folklorist Diane Tye has argued that bread pervades Newfoundland culture "more thoroughly than any other food."¹⁷ Her assertions are supported by import records, along with popular publications documenting the importance of flour and bread in early Newfoundland. The *Royal Gazette*, a St. John's based newspaper, for example, frequently featured merchants advertising their stock of flour. In 1816, merchant group Attwood & Hayes highlighted the "first arrival from New York of

¹³ Michel Morineau, "Growing Without Knowing Why: Production, Demographics, and Diet," in *Food: A Culinary History*, eds. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013): 339.

¹⁴ Colin Spencer, "The British Isles," in *Cambridge World History of Food*, eds. Kenneth F. Kiple and Kriemhild Conee Ornelas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521402149>

¹⁵ Colin Spencer, "The British Isles," <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521402149>

¹⁶ Morineau, "Growing Without Knowing Why," 341.

¹⁷ Diane Tye, "Bread for the Road," 175.

Flour and Bread.”¹⁸ And while advertising cannot establish clear consumption patterns, one can safely assume that merchants would not continue to import, advertise and sell products which were not being purchased and consumed by the population. The Custom House Returns reported consistently high quantities of flour imports throughout the nineteenth century. On the January 6, 1838 return, for instance, bread was imported at a quantity of 115,867,210 pounds and flour at 61,606 $\frac{3}{4}$ barrels.¹⁹ The total population in this period was approximately 75,843, allowing for over 1500 lbs. of bread per year for each inhabitant.²⁰ Flour was also used as currency, as one 1810 ad highlights:

BISCUIT BAKEHOUSE: For SALE, By JACOB GOFF, A Quantity of prime Pilot BREAD, in barrels; also, Fresh BISCUIT, on low terms; for which Flour will be taken in exchange.²¹

In another example, the Tizzard family of Salt Pans, Notre Dame Bay, purchased two acres of land for a barrel of flour.²²

Settlers in Newfoundland transferred their basic diet of bread to their new life on the island. Its importance was mentioned with derision by Bonnycastle when writing that the Irish in Newfoundland were so preoccupied with securing bread for their families that they were “not so excitable as at home.”²³ Bread fed families and

¹⁸ *The Royal Gazette*, January 4, 1816.

¹⁹ Sir Richard Bonnycastle, *Newfoundland in 1842: A Sequel to “the Canadas in 1841*, vol 2 (London: Henry Colburn, 1842): 198.

²⁰ “Population returns, 1836,” PANL. Of note, the population census of 1836 did not include Labrador or the French Shore. It was comprised of English settlements of the island’s east, south, and north-east coasts, or what was known as the English Shore.

²¹ *The Royal Gazette*, April 19, 1810.

²² Aubrey Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground: Reminiscences of Outport Life in Notre Dame Bay, Newfoundland*, ed. J.D.A. Widdowson (St. John’s, NL: Breakwater Books, 1984): 1.

²³ Bonnycastle, *Newfoundland in 1842*, vol. 2, 81.

served as a focal point for entertaining guests and travelers. Bonnycastle created an image of entertaining in nineteenth century Newfoundland:

The good wife puts some tea in the pot, spreads a clean cloth, if she has one at hand, or time admits, boils some eggs, produces a pat of fresh butter, and a large jug of milk, with a loaf of home-made bread; or, if that is wanting, white biscuit...[she] expects her visitor, whether he is hungry or not, to fall to, being perfectly satisfied if you drink three or four cups of tea...and eat a good deal of bread and butter...²⁴

Entertaining with bread carried through into the twentieth century. The tradition of bread making and its associations with hospitality were touted as a selling feature of Newfoundland. Over one-hundred years after Bonnycastle wrote about his experience, Phil H. Moore noted in 1945:

Good home baking is well worth while. Guests like homemade yeast bread better than the factory kind. Muffins, beaten biscuits, corn bread, corn sticks, tea biscuits and Parker House rolls, pancakes - those make a great hit with tourists. Take the trouble to make an impression that way. It pays dividends.²⁵

Guests could count on being offered a “cup of tea” in the 1960s, which included homemade bread, a cup of brewed tea, butter, homemade jam and possibly some cookies.²⁶

Some health and medical authorities considered white bread as one of the main causes of poor nutrition and diet-related diseases. Beriberi, for instance, was blamed on the tendency for families to “come down to a diet of bread and tea,” especially during winter months when food supplies dwindled.²⁷ Despite the efforts

²⁴ Bonnycastle, *Newfoundland in 1842*, vol. 2, 127-128.

²⁵ Phil H. Moore, “The Way to a Tourist’s Heart,” *Atlantic Guardian* 11, no. 7 (1945): 26.

²⁶ MUNFLA Folklore Survey Card, 68-4H/145.

²⁷ W.R. Aykroyd, “Beriberi and Other Food-Deficiency Diseases in Newfoundland and Labrador,” *The Journal of Hygiene* 30, no. 3 (1930): 359.

of medical professionals to change reliance on bread, it remained a staple for most families. Aubrey Tizzard recalled that “homemade bread with homemade butter or homemade bread covered with molasses and partridgeberry jam was always very appetizing and one would have to be quite sick to be unable to eat such a deliciously prepared meal.”²⁸ The making of bread was a relentless task for the women of the household. As Mrs. Amanda Cole remembered: “My dear, you had to make bread. What else did you have! I would mix up a hundred pound sack of flour every two weeks! And sure that didn’t last very long.”²⁹

The 1905 Ladies’ College Aid Society of the Methodist Church cookbook lists a variety of bread-based recipes, including one titled simply, “Bread.” The recipe’s contributor, Mrs. R. G. Pike, assumed that the targeted audience would understand what the end result should be based on this description. The recipe itself speaks to the simplicity and familiarity of the process:

Five quarts sifted flour, one tablespoon salt, piece of butter size of egg, one tablespoon sugar, two quarts luke-warm water, one cupful of yeast. Mix and knead thoroughly and leave in warm place all night. In the morning knead over and make into loaves, and when light, bake an hour.³⁰

The popular cookbook, *The Treasury of Newfoundland Dishes*, declared that “everybody likes home-baked bread and rolls - the golden, crusty goodness and the

²⁸ Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 5.

²⁹ Sonya M. Foley, *The Women of Fogo Island: Hear Them Speak* (Gander, Newfoundland: Economy Printing, 2001): 165, cited in Diane Tye, “Bread for the Road”: Intersections of Food and Culture in Newfoundland and Labrador,” *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 26, no. 2 (2011): 180.

³⁰ Ladies College Aid Society, *The L.C.A.S. Cookbook: Arranged from tried and proven recipes* (St. John’s, NL: Ladies College Aid Society of the Methodist Church, 1905): 36.

grand fragrance they bring to your kitchen.”³¹ This cookbook contains 37 recipes for breads, rolls, buns and biscuits, acknowledging the demand for such foods.

What began as a way for newcomers to maintain a sense of home and belonging became a significant part of Newfoundland food culture. By 1943, Newfoundlanders were obtaining two-thirds, or 67%, of their daily calories from carbohydrates, mainly comprised of white flour (and white sugar).³² Comparatively, the carbohydrate percentages for people in Canada and the United States was 51% and United Kingdom was 52%.³³ There is little doubt that for many Newfoundlanders “bread sustained more than Christ.”³⁴

Local Ingredients - Berries

Though flour and other staples could generally be imported, early settlers to Newfoundland would have been confronted with the challenges of obtaining vegetables and fruits, specifically those rich in Vitamin C and other important minerals. To compensate for these difficulties, settlers had only to look around to the many marshes and bogs to discover a wealth of native vegetation and berries which could be readily adopted into their diet. Reverend Lewis Anspach wrote in 1819 of

³¹ *A Treasury of Newfoundland Dishes*, first edition (St. John’s, NL: The Maple Leaf Milling Company, 1958): 6.

³² Colonel J. D. Adamson et al, *Medical Survey of Nutrition in Newfoundland* (Toronto: Murray Printing Company, 1945): 16.

³³ Adamson et al, *Medical Survey of Nutrition*, 16. There is some concerns when considering comparative averages in studies. For example, the differences between rural and urban populations are not often articulated. For the purposes of this paper, averages are used for rough comparisons only to identify the strong relationship between Newfoundlanders generally and bread substances.

³⁴ Tye, “Bread for the Road,” 178.

the abundance of red, black, and white currants, gooseberries and strawberries, along with cherries and damsons.³⁵ The use of berries, both as a food and as an economic source, would have lasting effects on the food culture in Newfoundland.

Berries were exported from Newfoundland in the early nineteenth century. According to Bonnycastle, 2850 gallons of berries were exported in 1840, mainly to Great Britain and the British West Indies.³⁶ While that number pales in comparison to the volume of cod exports (966 quintals of fresh cod and 915,795 quintals in dried cod the same year³⁷), it does acknowledge the economic value of local berry resources. Later, the 'berry note' was a source of family income as women picked and sold berries to supplement the household economy. Marilyn Porter has argued that the berry note was often of considerable value because it could be used by an industrious family to purchase their winter supplies of flour, sugar, beef, pork and margarine.³⁸ On a smaller scale, Len Margaret noted that in St. Leonard's the priest could pay up to 50 cents per gallon for bakeapples in the 1970s.³⁹ Margaret also recalled that "the local merchant would let the children "take up" the worth of the amount picked in something of their choice from the store."⁴⁰ The financial incentives proved berry picking was a worthwhile endeavor.

³⁵ Lewis Amadeus Anspach, *History of the Island of Newfoundland: containing a description of the island, the banks, the fisheries, and trade of Newfoundland and the coast of Labrador* (London: T and J Allman and J.M. Richardson, 1819): 361.

³⁶ Bonnycastle, *Newfoundland in 1842*, vol. 2, 204, 207.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

³⁸ Marilyn Porter, "She Was Skipper of the Shore-Crew:" Notes on the History of the Sexual Division of Labour in Newfoundland," *Labour* 15 (1985): 113.

³⁹ Len Margaret, *fish & brewis, toutens & tales: Recipes and Recollections from St. Leonard's, Newfoundland* (St. John's, NL: Breakwater Books, 1980), 130.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

To become part of the food culture, however, ingredients need to not only be incorporated into the diet of individuals but must also take on meaning as a part of their daily lives. Partridgeberries in particular would likely have been a novel discovery by early settlers. The red, fairly acidic berries, which ripen in late summer to early fall quickly became a staple ingredient. While not often eaten fresh, they were used to make jams, and they preserved well, according to Tizzard:

Partridgeberry jam was the most common of all jams; just about everyone had partridgeberry jam. Around the first of September each year everyone that could would roam the hills searching for this small red berry. Some would be cooked and made into jam at the time of picking, others would be preserved by putting them in water in earthen crocks or in watertight kegs.⁴¹

Partridgeberries became more popular during the twentieth century, partly for their uniqueness on the island. The word partridgeberry is unique in itself. The *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* is commonly known as lingonberry in Europe⁴², but Newfoundland and Labrador are the only places where it is known as the partridgeberry.⁴³ In 1956, The Jubilee Guilds published an insert of partridgeberry recipes in the *Atlantic Guardian*, promising to give a “new look to the partridgeberry.”⁴⁴ The recipes included the long-standing traditions of jam and sauce, but also included some updated ideas like the following recipe for Partridgeberry Sausage Grill:

2 doz. (approx. 1 ½ lbs) sausage links
8 slices bread, toasted
1 cup partridgeberry sauce
Canadian cheese, grated

⁴¹ Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 147.

⁴² “*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*,” *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaccinium_vitis-idaea

⁴³ *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, 2nd ed., s.v. “partridge berry.”

⁴⁴ The Jubilee Guilds, “Partridgeberry Recipes,” *Atlantic Guardian* 13, no. 4 (1956): 11.

Heat oven to 400 degrees F.

Fry sausage links until brown. Spread 2 tablespoons partridgeberry sauce on each slice of toast. Place sausages over partridgeberry sauce, using 3 for each slice. Sprinkle with grated cheese. Place on a cookie sheet and toast under a pre-heated broiler (400 degrees F) for five minutes, or until cheese melts. Yield: 8 servings.⁴⁵

Partridgeberries were not the only wild fruit available as many others also found their way into the common diet and culture of Newfoundlanders. Blueberries grew wild and often in abundance, even around the growing St. John's area.⁴⁶ Greta Hussey wrote of her experiences travelling with fishing crews to Labrador, "of course, in the fall of the year we had bakeapples, which were a real delicacy."⁴⁷ Similar to the partridgeberry, bakeapple is a uniquely Newfoundland name. Tracing its roots to 1771, the term bakeapple or baking apple replaced the European name, cloudberry.⁴⁸ More than nourishment, Greta Hussey describes the act of berry picking as a social occasion:

...the first day around the middle of August that the men weren't too rushed with the fish, all the crew, including the cook and children, would take off in the motorboat...every old enamel container we could find and all the water buckets went into the boat with us. We also took along the kettle to have a boil-up on the shore.⁴⁹

Porter argues that many "relished the opportunity to get out on the barrens and marshes" to pick berries.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ The Jubilee Guilds, "Partridgeberry Recipes," *Atlantic Guardian* 13, no. 4 (1956): 13.

⁴⁶ COLL-157, 1.01.012, August 24, 1946.

⁴⁷ Greta Hussey, *Our Life on Lear's Room Labrador* (St. John's, NL: Flanker Press, 2011): 54.

⁴⁸ *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, 2nd ed., s.v. "baking apple."

⁴⁹ Hussey, *Our Life on Lear's Room*, 55.

⁵⁰ Porter, "Skipper of the Shore-Crew," 112.

The *Medical Survey of Nutrition in Newfoundland* reported in 1945 that “wild berries are collected in season, but they are not abundant and probably contribute unimportantly to the food supply.”⁵¹ This likely reflected a scientific assessment of time as compared to calories and nutrition. Later studies and commentators criticized this claim and it did not correlate to the first-hand accounts of those actually living in Newfoundland.⁵² In fact, it seems that berries played an important role in the year-round diet of many, for both taste and nutrition. By recognizing the nutrition and economic value in local berries, early settlers were able to provide themselves with a supplement to their diet to compensate for a lack of available fruits and vegetables. Preserving the berries provided nutrients over the winter and the experience of berry picking was a social event for entire families and communities. In this way, berries became an important part of the early diets and continued as a part of Newfoundland food culture.

Making Do - Wild Animals

Not all food knowledge from the British Isles could be replicated by settlers in Newfoundland. In many cases, settlers had to be willing and able to adapt to their surroundings and adjust their food habits and preferences accordingly. While berries and native plants could easily substitute for some of the flavours of the home

⁵¹ Adamson et al, *Medical Survey of Nutrition*, 13.

⁵² D. P. Cuthbertson’s findings in his 1947 *Report on Nutrition in Newfoundland* contradicted much of the information found in the *Medical Survey* and questioned the methodology the previous study utilized.

country, other ingredients were quite different in taste and accessibility. One of the most formidable changes was the lack of affordable and available domesticated animals - namely, cows and pigs - as protein sources. In 1810, for example, there was such a scarcity of cattle that the residents of St. John's had "for several weeks been deprived of the use of fresh meat" and the Royal Navy could not procure fresh beef for its sailors.⁵³ When meat was available, every part of the animal was used or preserved to last through the seasons. Beef stomach and tongue were salted, the head was made into head cheese and blood puddings were made from intestines and blood.⁵⁴

The fact still remained that what was available was often expensive and most families could not afford to purchase fresh meat on a regular basis. In 1803, the merchants of several English ports, including Poole, Dartmouth and Bristol, who were heavily involved in the migratory fishing business in Newfoundland, petitioned the British Government regarding the high cost of imported pork and beef.⁵⁵ This problem continued well into the twentieth century. In 1928, G. J. Carter Ltd. sold beef for 22 cents per pound; this was expensive when compared to flour which was approximately 19 cents per pound and salted pork at 15 cents per pound.⁵⁶

To compensate for the elevated costs and lack of availability, early settlers and their descendants had to source protein from a variety of local wildlife and fish.

⁵³ Anspach, *History of the Island of Newfoundland*, 251.

⁵⁴ Margaret, *fish & brewis, toutens & tales*, 14.

⁵⁵ CO 194, 43, B-680, p. 282-288v, March 1803

⁵⁶ Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 140-142.

This practice introduced new tastes, hunting, and cooking methods into the food culture. Merchant Derrick Bowring wrote of a fishing trip in 1945 during which they “had some two dozen nice trout, frozen extremities but an internal stew from the generous rum ration we took along.”⁵⁷ Settlers commonly hunted seabirds either from fishing boats or from shore where possible. Maurice Burke writes of his experience “hunting” bullbirds in the 1940s:

During the Bull Bird Season we often lay in wait for these small birds (which look something like small turrs) with rock in hand. It’s a good thing that Brian Davies⁵⁸ wasn’t around in those days or there would have been an organized campaign against the cruelty of the hunt and we would have been depicted as young monsters out to destroy the species and upset the balance of the ecology. I suppose it *was* cruel to hide behind a rock, imitate the sounds of the unsuspecting little birds, to lure them within range, and then to pounce on them with a hail of small rock fire. We didn’t think of it as cruel...⁵⁹

While not everyone participated in this type of boyhood sport, many, like Tizzard, considered bullbirds as “very tasty, and when baked in the oven until brown and served with vegetables and gravy, they made a delicious meal.”⁶⁰ Even as access to fresh meat became more common, these early forms of protein continued to be an important part of the food culture. In a September 1962 letter to her mother-in-law, Moira Baird Bowring wrote that her son and a friend had gone off looking for wild ducks near Bay Bulls.⁶¹ Hunters also sought other wild animals including caribou in the interior and rabbits. While the commercial seal hunt was slow to develop,

⁵⁷ COLL-157, 1.01.011, April 17, 1945.

⁵⁸ Founder of the International Fund for Animal Welfare and vocal opponent of the commercial seal hunt

⁵⁹ Maurice Burke, *Memories of Outport Life* (St. John’s, NL: Creative Printers & Publishers, 1985): 11.

⁶⁰ Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 137.

⁶¹ Bowring Collection, CNS COLL-157, 1.01.028, September 17, 1962.

individual settlers along the Northeast coast and Southern Shore areas hunted seals for food when the ice floes brought the seals close to land. The culture of manliness which developed from this practice would echo years later as men went away on sealing vessels for the commercial hunt.⁶²

Like Aboriginal peoples before them, Newfoundlanders of European ancestry often considered hunting trips the highlight of the fall and winter calendar. As Margaret writes, people returned to prized hunting grounds year after year:

The main purpose of the trip was to hunt caribou, and the area around Wigwam Brook, where a campsite had been chosen, was believed to have been the hunting grounds of the Red Indians. This was wonderful rabbit country too, so that a successful hunt could, and often did, result in three or four caribou, thirty or forty braces of rabbits and a couple of dozen partridges.⁶³

Wild animals certainly comprised an important part of the Aboriginal inhabitants' diet. Interactions between European settlers and Aboriginal tribes in Newfoundland were limited when compared to other parts of North America. The Beothuk, for example, had little interest in trade and did not need European allies as other peoples in North America.⁶⁴ The demise of the Beothuk peoples has been largely attributed to them being pushed into smaller and smaller territory, away from traditional hunting grounds and food supplies. There are limited sources documenting the degree of contact and how much tradition was shared and adopted

⁶² For a more detailed explanation of sealing in Newfoundland, refer to: Shannon Ryan, *The Last of the Ice Hunters: An Oral History of the Newfoundland Seal Hunt* (St. John's, NL: Flanker Press, 2014) and Willeen Keough, "(Re-)telling Newfoundland Sealing Masculinity: Narrative and Counter-Narrative," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 21, no. 1 (2010): 131-150.

⁶³ Margaret, *fish & brewis, toutens & tales*, 18.

⁶⁴ Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador*, 42.

by Europeans. However, oral tradition, as noted above by Len Margaret, acknowledged the Aboriginal hunting and foraging grounds and the methods used for survival. In later years, Aboriginal people acted as hunting guides for settlers, and eventually, sportsman and tourists. In this manner, Indigenous traditions, including ceremonial rituals and the importance of the natural world were shared with settlers.

Wild game and seabirds continued to play a large role in the diets of twentieth century Newfoundlanders. Due to limits in transportation and refrigeration, many areas of the island continued to be restricted to what could be preserved or what could be obtained locally. The novelty of many domesticated animals was apparent into the twentieth century. Aubrey Tizzard writes of the excitement around the first turkey in his home community in 1933:

That was the first turkey I ever saw, and the greatest majority of people in that area were the same - they had never seen a turkey either dead or alive before they saw the one we had. It was indeed a novelty; everyone that came to the post office or shop stopped for a little while to gaze at this beautiful big bird. We had it for Christmas dinner that year, and when ready for the oven it weighed nine pounds. A huge bird.⁶⁵

Even as the variety of food increased many families continued to employ many of the preservation techniques used in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. What could not be consumed immediately was preserved by bottling, drying, smoking or simply hanging from the rafters of a cool cellar.⁶⁶ Another method was brining; beef, pork,

⁶⁵ Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 44.

⁶⁶ Pamela Jane Gray, "Traditional Newfoundland Foodways: Origin, Adaptation and Change" (Master's Thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977): 114-115.

turrs, bullbirds and various fish were all pickled to last over the winter months.⁶⁷

Wild animals and seabirds continued to be a part of Newfoundland food culture, even when the variety of other food choices increased.

Bread, berries and animals all provide an image of food culture in the making. Early settlers used ingenuity mixed with nostalgia for their homeland to create dishes which sustained them in a new environment. Early creations like fish and brewis, toutens, moose stew and baked rabbit were indeed rough food and designed out of necessity. As the twentieth century progressed, these foods of necessity would transform into cultural icons. Women guided these food developments over time and their influence was a determining factor in which foods remained and which disappeared.

Women and Food

Women formed the crucial puzzle piece in how food traditions developed. They were the gatekeepers of knowledge of ingredients, techniques and family preferences. Food culture developed and was sustained through women's role as providers and community leaders. As the history of food tradition and ingredients are revealed, so too is the integral role of women in these developments. The role of women is central to any discussion on foodways and food traditions. Women were integral players in both private and public spheres and often used food knowledge as a display of power. Counihan argues that food is "often a medium of exchange,

⁶⁷ Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 136, 141.

connection and distinction” between men and women.⁶⁸ Furthermore, food can reveal “much about power relations, the shaping of community and personality, the construction of the family, systems of meaning and communication, and conceptions of sex, sexuality and gender.”⁶⁹ Women are often responsible for food security within their families, as well as the gatekeepers of the social and cultural aspects of food knowledge. This role permits the sharing of food culture through generations, within and among communities. There is an intricate connection between women and the use of food in daily life as well as in communal celebrations. Aubrey Tizzard recalled that his mother was the one to prepare all meals for three children, her husband and family guests, who were all “hearty eaters.”⁷⁰ This role of food provider certainly extended to the community as well. Geraldine Chafe Rubia provides this example from the mid-1960s:

Mrs. Brett Williams tells me that in the Goulds...a dance would be held at the old Pavilion (an obsolete railway station) on the Petty Harbour Road. Women of the parish would bring their boilers, dishes, and cutlery to cook and serve the Colcannon to hungry dancers taking a spell from the lancers and quadrille.⁷¹

Of particular note is the role of hostess and the importance of the kitchen (a woman’s domain) within the family home. Women in Newfoundland used their knowledge of food to assert authority in obtaining, preserving and cooking to ensure the everyday survival of their families. Moreover, these women turned their

⁶⁸ Counihan, “Food and Gender,” 4.

⁶⁹ Carole Counihan, “The Social and Cultural Uses of Food,” <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521402149>

⁷⁰ Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 22

⁷¹ Geraldine Chafe Rubia, *A Poem in My Soup: A Newfoundland Sampler with Selected Poetry*, 2nd ed. (St. John’s, NL: Flanker Press, 2010): 3.

connection with food into power to link the private and public spheres of their community and to lay the foundation for long-lasting food traditions on the island.

Given the patriarchal restrictions women often face in society, food offers an outlet to demonstrate skill and share knowledge. As Jill Nussel notes, women transmit “values and family ritual not with sermons or politics, but with dinner.”⁷² Anne Murcott argues that while the tasks of cooking are the responsibility of women, there is a tacit skill in adapting meals to individual tastes and needs. By using this knowledge, women reaffirm their roles as wives and mothers, but more critically, they confirm themselves as the “woman of *this*, rather than any other, household.”⁷³ This is a significant expression of ownership and proprietorship of the household knowledge. This knowledge is passed through generations as mothers teach their daughters their customary ways of cooking and daughters develop subtle changes and improve on the old ways.⁷⁴ Women were, and often still are, expected to provide food for their families in the present while also carrying the traditions forward to the future.

The sharing of food and demonstrations of hospitality speak to cultural identity and one’s role in society. Tye wrote of her mother’s cooking obligation to her family along with the expectation to entertain as the minister’s wife. The ability to provide a variety and quantity of food for guests signified her role as a respectable

⁷² Jill Nussel, “Heating Up the Sources: Using Community Cookbooks in Historical Inquiry,” *History Compass* 4/5 (2006): 959.

⁷³ Anne Murcott, “On the social significance of the “cooked dinner” in South Wales,” *Anthropology of Food* 21, no. 4/5 (1982): 692.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 693.

member of the church community.⁷⁵ Marilyn Porter has acknowledged that a woman was “honour-bound” to set a meal before her family or visitor when they entered the home.⁷⁶ Bonnycastle wrote of his experience with this long-held tradition:

I never walked into one of these kind-hearted people’s dwellings...without immediate and silent preparations for the stranger; for they do the same to all respectable persons...⁷⁷

Much of the historical record refers to the guest in using a male pronoun such as ‘he’ or ‘his’. This may represent a gendered style of writing. It may also denote a level of submission or deferral to a male guest from the, normally, female host. Porter disputes the argument of some feminist scholars that this was a manner of subservience. Instead, she convincingly argues that the ability of a woman to provide for family and guests was a matter of pride and required enormous expertise and management. The silent command over the kitchen is seen as confidence and an assertion of authority over this part of the home. Kennan Ferguson supports this assertion, noting that often women engaged in the creation of cookbooks as a way to recognize the knowledge and experience that is required to feed a family and to share this knowledge with others.⁷⁸ Porter notes that the ability of a woman to tend to all the cooking needs of her family displayed a “sense of quiet confidence in [her] control of the kitchen and the house,” and was acknowledged by male family

⁷⁵ Diane Tye, *Baking as Biography: A Life Story in Recipes* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010): 137.

⁷⁶ Porter, “Skipper of the Shore-Crew,” 113.

⁷⁷ Bonnycastle, *Newfoundland in 1842*, vol. 2, 127-128.

⁷⁸ Kennan Ferguson, “Intensifying Taste, Intensifying Identity: Collectivity through Community Cookbooks,” *Signs* 37, no. 3 (2002): 696.

members as a formidable contribution to the family.⁷⁹ Women were often noted for their ingenuity and creativity when it came to making meals and in making use of all available products. Their thrift and economy were touted as positive attributes. A 1946 article discussing cod as a foodstuff argued “the thrifty housewife can serve up a dozen different delicacies” and they have come to realize that it is a “swimming store-house” of recipes.⁸⁰ The famous quote from Josiah Hobbs, which forms the title of Hilda Chaulk Murray’s book on Ellison, Newfoundland, continues to ring true: “The woman was more than fifty per cent...She was the driving force.”⁸¹ Regardless of the occasion, as Bowring remembers, women were there “with soup, rum and lots of grub.”⁸²

The kitchen served as a place, not just for providing food, but as the centre of the family and the community’s cultural hub. A tradition which began hundreds of years ago, was still present in the mid to late twentieth century. Grey noted that the kitchen served a function greater than the place to cook and eat meals but also as a place where guests were entertained, songs were sung, card games played, tales told and where people danced during kitchen parties.⁸³ As cooks and household managers, women ruled from their kitchens. This command over the kitchen, and ultimately the home, effectively controlled the link between public and private. The kitchen, and the food in it, was viewed as public space, an extension of the

⁷⁹ Porter, “Skipper of the Shore-Crew,” 119.

⁸⁰ H. M. Heath, “Where the Cod is King,” *Atlantic Guardian* 2, no. 1 (1946): 24.

⁸¹ Murray, *More than Fifty Percent*, 12.

⁸² CNS COLL-157, 1.01.028, September 5, 1962.

⁸³ Grey, “Traditional Newfoundland Foodways,” 87.

community. Bonnycastle reflects that in this room, “you always see the good housewife busily employed in some culinary occupations.”⁸⁴ With food at its core, the kitchen was the place where discussions took place, community members interacted, and decisions were made. Porter argues:

The distinction between “public” and “private” in Newfoundland outports did not happen between “outside” and “inside” but between the kitchen, which was public, and the rest of the house, which was private. The kitchen was not just an extension of the community, but in effective terms, the centre of it. No one knocked at a kitchen door. Anyone could come and go as they pleased...⁸⁵

Hilda Murray Chaulk also echoes Porter’s arguments by noting that no one knocked when entering the kitchen but walked right in, compared to the rest of the house which was very private.⁸⁶ The knock on the door is quite significant. It was highlighted in the introduction to Simani’s song, *Any Mummers Allowed In?*. Pocius explains the significance in a changing time in Newfoundland:

The knock is quite startling when the song is first heard, just as startling as in a home context where knocking was unheard of when gaining entry to someone else’s kitchen. No one knocked before entering a house, unless he or she was a stranger...But in this contemporary time when “things have gone modern” and knocking by friends and strangers alike may now be commonplace.⁸⁷

A time gone by is remembered by Aubrey Tizzard who described his childhood kitchen as one with a couch, three kitchen chairs and a rocking chair with large sideboard and table for people to gather around.⁸⁸ He also noted that while the

⁸⁴ Bonnycastle, *Newfoundland in 1842*, vol. 2, 126.

⁸⁵ Porter, “Skipper of the Shore-Crew,” 120.

⁸⁶ Murray, *More Than Fifty Percent*, 108

⁸⁷ Pocius, “The Mummers Song in Newfoundland,” 68.

⁸⁸ Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 13.

kitchen was accessed directly from the outside door, the “inside room” or living room, could only be accessed through an interior hallway or through the dining room, indicating its private status as “no visitors ever went that far.”⁸⁹

Women’s role in maintaining food culture ebbed and flowed but remained a constant influence in Newfoundland. As mothers, wives and daughters, the first settler women strove to feed their families while also paying tribute to their ancestors. By continuing the use of bread, adapting to new vegetation and fruits and adopting native game, settlers created an ingenious and useful diet for themselves. Overtime, these foods remained a part of the Newfoundland culture. As the twentieth century approached, Newfoundland’s food culture would be challenged by many internal and external factors.

⁸⁹ Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 17, 21.

Chapter 2 – “Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary’s”

At the turn of the twentieth century, Newfoundlanders appeared hopeful and positive about the future. They held celebrations commemorating John Cabot’s “discovery” of the island and the economy was on the upswing.¹ However, the world would soon be caught in total warfare as the First World War loomed, followed by the devastating effects of a widespread economic depression. The Depression era was challenging for many people, especially those relying on a capitalist economy in North America and Europe. Markets plummeted, droughts destroyed crops and farmland and access to employment became scarce. Newfoundland, with a reliance on exports and international trade, suffered its own particular hardships. The average export price for salt cod fell from \$9 per quintal in 1929 to \$4 in 1936.² This drop contributed to a decline in jobs and forced up to 90,000 people - one-third of the population at the time - on to public relief.³ As Theresa Bishop notes in her analysis of the mid-war years, growth in large-scale poverty, disease and malnutrition mean that “the average laboring man had little energy left for defending national pride.”⁴ There was little resistance as Newfoundlanders were dealt a political blow and lost responsible government in 1933. Writing in retrospect, A. B. Perlin lamented this “sorry end” in Newfoundland’s history as

¹ Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador*, 154.

² James Overton, “Brown Flour and Beriberi: The Politics of Dietary and Health Reform in Newfoundland in the First Half of the Twentieth Century,” *Newfoundland Studies* 14, no. 1 (1988): 12.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Theresa Lynn Bishop, “Public Health and Welfare in Newfoundland, 1929-1939,” (Master’s thesis, Queen’s University, 1984): 7.

“terrible times, times that truly tried men’s souls, undermined their health and gravely impaired their morale.”⁵

Depression Era & Health

During the first half of the twentieth century, the health of many individuals declined, often linked to poor quantity and quality of diet. During World War I the poor physical condition of Newfoundlanders was evident. During the war’s recruitment 4,128 volunteers (46.7%) and 2,056 conscripts (56.7%) were rejected as medically unfit to serve.⁶ Several nutrition and medical surveys were commissioned and drafted to determine the level of health among residents. In most, the results were dismal at best. The reports typically blamed the Newfoundland diet for leaving its citizens weak, sick and unfit for the modern workforce. Noting “poor fertility of the land, lack of adequate transportation and extensive poverty” as leading causes, one Medical Survey summed up Newfoundlanders’ food habits as “distinctly bad.”⁷ New research is poised to question some of the more extreme arguments and methodology of these reports.⁸ Nevertheless, the medical community at the time was convinced that the Newfoundland diet lacked vital nutrients.

⁵ A.B. Perlin, “The Fabulous Fifties: A Social Revolution for Newfoundland,” *The Newfoundland Journal of Commerce* (January 1960): 27.

⁶ C.A. Sharpe, “The ‘Race of Honour’: An Analysis of Enlistments and Casualties in the Armed Forces of Newfoundland: 1914-1918,” *Newfoundland Studies* 4, no. 1 (1988): 32. The numbers of volunteers and conscripts deemed medically unfit was also high in Canada and Britain.

⁷ Adamson et al, “Forward,” in *Medical Survey of Nutrition*, 2.

⁸ See Eric Strikwerda, “Newfoundland and Labrador Maligned: Taking Stock of Nutritional Health in Rural Newfoundland and Labrador, 1912-1949,” *Acadiensis* 47, 1 (2018): 118-139. And James T. Connor, “Malnutrition Research in Newfoundland in the 1900s to 1930s, brown flour and the ‘dole plague’ of beriberi,” part I and II forthcoming in *The Newfoundland Quarterly*, 111, no. 4 and 112, no. 1 (April and June 2019).

Despite possible issues with some of the surveys, the link between diet and diseases, like beriberi, had been long established by the medical profession. Dr. W. R. Aykroyd, in his 1930 report in *The Journal of Hygiene*, noted that beriberi, a once non-existent condition in Newfoundland, was at that time considered endemic, particularly in outports along the coast.⁹ Aykroyd commented that beriberi was “rigidly associated with poverty.”¹⁰ While death rates from beriberi were low,¹¹ recovery and long-term prognosis was very much linked to dietary treatment:

The average case admitted to hospital and given whole-wheat bread, milk, eggs, beans, peas and cabbages, is usually discharged in six to eight weeks almost fit for work; others, left to drag along at home without supervision and really adequate dietary treatment, may remain semi-paralyzed from six months to two years.¹²

These reports confirmed that health and diet were intertwined with one another. It also placed scrutiny on the traditional diet of many in Newfoundland. As district Nurse Godden noted in reference to tuberculosis, many people in the early twentieth century “seldom see or taste fresh meat, very little milk, or any of the principle necessities.”¹³ Unlike beri-beri, tuberculosis was not a nutritional deficiency disease. It could, and did, affect people across the socioeconomic scale with weaker immune systems. However, people lacking adequate nutrition and proper living conditions were at a significant disadvantage in fighting the disease. Generally, to improve

⁹ Aykroyd, “Beriberi and Other Food-Deficiency Diseases,” 357.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 366.

¹¹ Dr. Aykroyd notes a high of 20 deaths in 1914, with only 9 deaths reported in the years 1917-1926. He notes a low-death rate for a population of 250,000 (page 358).

¹² Aykroyd, “Beriberi and Other Food-Deficiency Diseases,” 359.

¹³ “Report of the Tuberculosis Public Service for the Year 1915,” *Journal of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland* (St. John’s, NL: Government of Newfoundland, 1916): 651.

health, individuals were expected to improve their diet. Aykroyd wrote that “if a family can afford but a little greater variety of food than the minimum necessary to keep body and soul together, they will escape beriberi.”¹⁴ The general message in these reports by ‘specialists’ was that an individual’s ability to remain healthy was a matter of personal responsibility and personal failure. While the poor were especially blamed for their ills, eventually the government was compelled to intervene.

Commission Government and Dole Bread

On the verge of bankruptcy, the Newfoundland government, led by Frederick C. Alderdice, signed over its democracy and dominion status in February 1934.¹⁵ In its place, a non-democratic, appointed group of six men (three from Newfoundland and three from Britain) formed a Commission Government who intended to right the wrongs of generations of mismanagement and corruption.¹⁶ Nothing was left untouched, including Newfoundlanders’ food. As the Second World War approached, Newfoundland’s Commission Government inserted itself into the food supplies and food regulations of its citizens. One of the key ways the Commission Government attempted to improve the health of the population was to mandate the use of brown flour for recipients of public relief (“dole” recipients). This policy reflected a moralizing way of controlling food, along with the poor themselves. The backlash to

¹⁴ Aykroyd, “Beriberi and Other Food-Deficiency Diseases,” 367.

¹⁵ Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador*, 208

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

dole bread was unprecedented and resembled bread riots of previous centuries. Several newspapers argued vehemently against the policy and for the superiority of white flour. *The Newfoundlander* incited its readers by contending that there was “no reason under heaven why man should adopt the dietary habits of a guinea pig just because cabbage is rich in Vitamin C, or restrict his diet to nuts because squirrels do not have appendicitis.”¹⁷ The dole bread became a symbol of a larger discontent among the unemployed and how they were treated. James Overton has argued that the unemployed were battling for a basic right to exist and for basic freedoms.¹⁸ He noted that the public relief system of the early twentieth century gave the state increasing control over an individual’s life. In order to even qualify for relief, recipients had to be completely destitute and were subjected to detailed investigations by police or relieving officers.¹⁹ Deputy Commissioner of Public Health, Doctor Harrison Mosdell maintained that the investigations were necessary to make public relief “an unpleasant experience” to encourage people to get off of the dole.²⁰ This process dealt a striking blow to an individual’s self-determination. The dole bread highlighted the constant agitation brewing below the surface between the island’s unemployed and the administrators. As Overton has written:

They demanded work for wages, not dole...They wanted to be treated like human beings, not animals, by government officials. They were against “the third degree.” People wanted more food and they wanted a choice of what they would eat...And they did not want brown flour. This brought them into direct conflict with the Commissioner

¹⁷ “The Nutritive Superiority of Bread vs. Fads,” *The Newfoundlander*, November 3, 1934.

¹⁸ Overton, “Brown Flour and Beriberi,” 18.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Bishop, “Public Health and Welfare,” 7.

responsible for relief, who was described by one of the leaders of the unemployed as “the most scientific starvationist that ever existed.”²¹

I believe one of the reasons the dole bread policy struck such a sour note with the population is the strong symbolism imbued into bread as part of the traditional food culture.

The stigma of the dole bread was significant, and while such psychic scars are not unique to Newfoundland they appear to have had a lasting effect on the Newfoundland population. The strength in food culture is that despite an overall hatred for the brown flour, many people made do and adapted the flour to fit their long-standing tradition. Unwilling to sacrifice their bread, housewives created recipes like the one following, to incorporate the flour into a “reasonably palatable batch of bread.”²² This recipe also speaks to the time and effort needed to create bread from scratch.

Depression Bread

5 cups Dole flour
5 cups white flour
½ cup molasses
1 yeast cake
2 tbsp fat
1 tbsp salt
1 cup warm water to soak the yeast
4 cups warm water
1 tsp sugar

Add 1 teaspoon of sugar to 1 cup of warm water. Add the yeast cake and soak until soft. Add enough white flour to make a soft dough. Cover and let rise.

²¹ Overton, “Brown Flour and Beriberi,” 18.

²² Margaret, *fish & brewis, toutens & tales*, 106.

Mix both kinds of flour together in a bread pan. Add the salt. Rub in the fat with the fingertip. Add the molasses to 2 cups of warm water and stir into the flour mixture. Add the yeast dough and enough warm water to make a stiff bread dough. Turn out on a floured board and knead well. Put it back in the bread pan, cover and set in warm place to rise overnight.

Next morning knead down and let rise again. Form the dough into loaves, put into greased baking pans, cover and let rise again for 1 hour.

Bake in a moderate oven until done.²³

There was no long-term replacing of white flour, however. As soon as the economy improved during the Second World War and people were able to get off public relief, they returned to white bread.

Second World War and Outside Perceptions

The Second World War brought Newfoundlanders back into the global spotlight as a defensive position against any German attempt to attack Canada and the Eastern United States. Through the British-American land-lease deal, the United States Army established several bases on the island.²⁴ These bases provided increased employment opportunities for local citizens, and the presence of American servicemen increased exposure to American culture and ideas. As Steven High has noted, the arrival of the Americans was a cause of celebration which deeply overshadowed the arrival of the Canadian servicemen.²⁵ The arrival of American

²³ Margaret, *fish & brewis, toutens & tales*, 106.

²⁴ Steven High, "Working for Uncle Sam: The "Comings" and "Goings" of Newfoundland Base Construction Labour, 1940-1945," *Acadiensis* 32, no. 2 (2003): 84.

²⁵ Steven High, "Introduction," in *Occupied St. John's: A Social History of a City at War, 1939-1945* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010): 5.

servicemen was generally perceived as positive. The bases brought jobs and high wages to local men and women. Socially, there were large numbers of marriages between American servicemen and local women, with estimates of 25,000 marriages up to the 1960s.²⁶ The relationships and interactions between local Newfoundland population and the “friendly invaders” are important to this study in terms of the stigmas created, reinforced and rejected. Not all interactions between the locals and the service people were positive. As Margaret Duley wrote:

At first the Newfoundland civilian was stunned. He had always had his country and his roads to himself...Now he felt dispossessed, crowded on his own streets, moved down by the ever-increasing numbers of dun-coloured army vehicles. The strangers were strutting, becoming the “big shots.” They looked down their noses at the natives. They were disdainful of a hard old heritage. They began to call the townfolk “the Newfies” and like Queen Victoria, the Newfoundlanders were not amused.²⁷

For the most part, the evidence suggests that at least the senior brass of both the American and Canadian forces did not think too highly of the Newfoundlanders they employed and encountered. In 1944, US Senator J. M. Mead wrote that “for the most part they’re a feeble and neglected lot of poor folks.”²⁸ During recruitment for a US military base, he noted that they had found “two hundred and fifty as equal in output to about one hundred ordinary Americans.”²⁹ While it remains challenging to distinguish the official military opinions from that of regular servicemen, the

²⁶ Steven High, “Rethinking the Friendly Invasion,” in *Occupied St. John’s: A Social History of a City at War, 1939-1945* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010): 152.

²⁷ Margaret Duley, *The Caribou Hut: The Story of a Newfoundland Hostel* (Toronto: Ryerson University Press, 1949): 11.

²⁸ PANL GN 38 S6-1-8 File 3, F.F. Tisdall to Dr. J. McGrath, April 12, 1945.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

stereotypes and negative comments carried forward into the twentieth century, impacting generations of Newfoundlanders.

With the opinions of the American and Canadians well known, the Commission Government looked to new efforts to improve the health of citizens. This led to further enhancement and introduction of food policies. Following the lead of Britain, Canada and the United States, the Commission Government looked for alternatives to their food regulation policies as World War II approached. Manufacturing company Harvey-Brehm's account records indicate that they had experimented with adding vitamins A and D to their margarine production as early as 1935.³⁰ The Commission Government followed suit and eventually opted for "chemical reinforcement"³¹ of white flour. They introduced flour enriched with B complex vitamins and iron in June 1944.³² Despite these efforts the Government generally failed to increase the overall health of the population. The economic prosperity brought by World War II did assist in improving the diets of Newfoundlanders as people could afford more food. However, many still viewed the population as undernourished, especially outsiders and those with political power.

The food control policies of the Commission Government, along with the views of outsiders, had long-lasting social and psychological ramifications on Newfoundland people relating to their food culture. It did not matter whether the policies or opinions were correct, but that they were internalized by many as an

³⁰ PANL MG 39 Box 4 File 1, Manager's Report, April 25, 1936.

³¹ PANL GN 38 S3-5-3 File 25, Wallwyn to Atlee, April 30, 1943.

³² Overton, "Brown Flour and Beriberi," 23.

example of the backwardness of the island's people. It is arguable that Newfoundlanders came through the Second World War generally more prosperous than before, but they would become firmly entrenched in what would become a long-term struggle between a desire for modernity and inclusion in North American society and the desire to preserve a uniquely Newfoundland culture. This tension greatly impacted the food culture of the people, but the first battle waged was a political one: the choice to join Canada in 1949.

Confederation and Food Modernization

Countless pens have gone to paper to explain the myriad of opinions, conspiracies and actions which resulted in Newfoundlanders voting to join the Canadian Confederation in 1949. Jerry Bannister encapsulates the goals of the Smallwood faction leading up to Confederation and their result:

Smallwood's idea was to smash the old economy and culture, and build a new modern society from scratch. His crash program of industrialization depended on state-run enterprises...Smallwood promised to yank Newfoundlanders kicking and screaming into the modern age, and he was true to his word. He still casts a long shadow over our collective memory and...Newfoundlanders have yet to come fully to grips with a leader who has become a cultural icon.³³

Clearly, Smallwood aimed to lead his fellow Newfoundlanders into prosperity and modernization and felt joining Canada was the optimal way to do so. As Smallwood told a reporter in July 1949: "We have no intention of becoming a ward of Canada, less of becoming a sort of glorified poorhouse trying to subsist on family allowances

³³ Bannister, "Making History," 186.

and old-age pension and other social securities granted by the union. Our people are proud and independent and determined to contribute to the union while they share in its benefits.”³⁴ What has been less studied than the political changes, yet is quite apparent, is that Confederation brought many Newfoundlanders into the consumer and industrial culture of North America in rapid time. Changes had been slowly evolving, but the union with Canada sped up the social and cultural changes that followed the political decisions. For example, after becoming a province, Newfoundland experienced an influx in investment towards transportation, communication and development which in turn led to more jobs and higher expectations in living standards.³⁵

Most of this change is epitomized in the consumer culture evident in much of North America beginning in the early twentieth century and certainly progressing quickly by the mid-twentieth century. Consumer culture includes the economic, social and cultural practices associated with the manufacture, marketing, sale and purchase of commodities.³⁶ Graham Broad argues that the purchasing of consumer goods is intricately linked to the spiritual and emotional needs of individuals. While Broad writes about the Second World War period, his arguments are certainly applicable to post-Confederation Newfoundland as the quest for the benefits of being part of North America excited many. As Broad writes:

³⁴ “Former C. B. Man Interviews J.R.S. At Halifax,” *The Western Star*, July 12, 1949.

³⁵ Gulliver, “Preserving the Best,” 66.

³⁶ Graham Broad, *A Small Price to Pay: Consumer Culture on the Canadian Home Front, 1939-1945* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013): 2.

People craved fun, comfort, sensual pleasure, improved social status, friendship, affection, and love...the emergent consumer culture promised to animate the world of material objects, vesting them with the power to deliver all this and more.³⁷

Generations before had appeared content with less material goods than those living in the mid-twentieth century consumer society. For people in Newfoundland, there were limits to what they could access and purchase simply through the restrictions in transportation and communication. In rural Newfoundland there would typically be a small family-owned or merchant owned store that supplied the fishermen and their families. There were also travelling peddlers, the coastal boats and mail-order catalogs. These shopping options did not offer the variety and convenience that people in more densely populated areas of North America were accustomed to. Prior to Confederation, many imports from Canada and other countries were subject to tariffs and import surcharges. Aubrey Tizzard remembers that an order his mother placed with Eaton's in Toronto totaling a little over \$2, would be subject to a 33% duty charge when it arrived.³⁸ These fees would have been prohibitive to many, limiting purchasing options. As Newfoundland officially became the tenth Canadian province, these economic policies no longer applied, and products more freely entered Newfoundland stores and homes. Food, like televisions, clothing and cars, was part of this influx of consumer products.

The quest for modernization and industrialization became apparent in the access to and incorporation of North American food trends in the households of

³⁷ Broad, *A Small Price to Pay*, 3.

³⁸ Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 15.

Newfoundlanders. The connection between modernity and food is clear, according to Sherrie A. Inness:

This fascination with modernity, in everything from cars to buildings, also influenced how men and women wanted to lead their lives. They wished to be associated with modernity because it represented progress and change, which was especially important for women since, in the past, they had been stereotyped as antimodern...Thus, when women associated convenience foods with modernity, they also implicitly aligned themselves with it, too.³⁹

Inness was writing about the United States, but her argument is no less applicable to Newfoundland. Many Newfoundlanders wanted to be considered modern and wanted to 'shake off' the image of being backward and unfashionable that lingered in public perception. One of the ways this could be achieved was through the use of modern processed, convenience foods.

Convenience Foods & Marketing

Companies like Heinz, Kellogg and Campbells had been producing convenience foods like canned soups, sauces, cereals and cake mixes since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴⁰ The variety and volume of these products rapidly expanded in the mid-twentieth century and the proliferation of processed and convenience foods was evident across North America. By 1934, thirty-nine million pounds of frozen food were sold in the United States; 10 years later, in 1944, that number had increased to six hundred million pounds.⁴¹ In

³⁹ Sherrie A. Inness, *Secret Ingredients: Race, Gender, and Class at the Dinner Table* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 25.

⁴⁰ Claude Fischler, "The "McDonaldization" of Culture," in *Food: A Culinary History*, eds. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013): 475.

⁴¹ Frank Boles, "Stirring Constantly": 150 Years of Michigan Cookbooks," *Michigan Historical Review* 32, no. 2 (2006): 37-38.

essence, as described by Fischler, food had become a “high-tech product. Designed, packaged, marketed and advertised with the help of the latest techniques, food was distributed through increasingly complex and finely tuned commercial channels.”⁴² Newfoundlanders would not have been unfamiliar with these trends. The Bowring Brothers firm was producing canned fish chowder, salmon, tomato and vegetable soups, among other products by 1931.⁴³ Purity foods, a well-known name in Newfoundland food history, manufactured candies, cookies and canned meat. The difference for many was in scale and accessibility. Mass-produced frozen, freeze-dried and canned products made variety more affordable and accessible year-round. Improvements in transportation, like road development, and communication meant that communities that were once somewhat isolated could now access larger towns and stores more easily. Furthermore, due to general economic improvements as well as financial incentives like family allowance and old-age pensions, more people could afford what was available for sale. Even given these improvements, however, winter still proved challenging in many communities. Transportation routes and communications were limited and well into the twenty-first century, very isolated or coastal communities, especially on the Northern Peninsula, could be iced-in or cut-off from travel until spring.

Convenience foods did not just appear on shop shelves and in homes. There was a systematic process to create and distribute these items across North America

⁴² Fischler, “The “McDonaldization” of Culture,” 476.

⁴³ PANL MG 39 Box 4 File 1, Recipes for Fish Chowder, Salmon, Tomato and Vegetable Soup

and the globe. To get these new products into homes, manufacturers mobilized a massive marketing machine that, according to Inness, created a “fantasy about how effortless cooking could be.”⁴⁴ In 1920 the food industry spent approximately \$14 million on advertising; by 1990 that number had dramatically increased to \$7.6 billion.⁴⁵ As televisions, radios and print media became more commonplace, exposure to this advertising machine was unavoidable. Companies in Newfoundland took advantage of this growing trend to promote their own products and compete with North American producers. Job Bros. & Co. extolled the virtues of their Hubay quick-frozen cod fillets: “Newfoundland Codfish, caught in the crystal-clear waters of the North Atlantic, packed and frozen by the quick-freeze method is indeed Seafood par excellence.”⁴⁶ Serving Brookfield Ice Cream made preparing dessert simple.⁴⁷ The push towards modernization was extended to all aspects of the kitchen, including appliances. A mid-1970s ad for Simpson Sears on Water Street, St. John’s, advertised the “Kenmore 3 C’s of Cooking”: Capacity (largest oven), Convenience (“No need to hover near the oven. Just set it and forget it!”) and Clean-easy.⁴⁸ Nafco ranges were advertised as the way to get real cooking and baking satisfaction:

Sick and tired of baking failures?
Yes, you’ve followed the Recipe exactly and still it wasn’t good.
Madam, you need a
“NAFCO” Range

⁴⁴ Inness, *Secret Ingredients*, 23.

⁴⁵ Katherine J. Parkin, *Food is Love: Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006): 2.

⁴⁶ *Atlantic Guardian* 2, no. 1, January 1946.

⁴⁷ United Church Girls Club, *Corner Brook’s Favourite Recipes* (1948): 276.

⁴⁸ St. Thomas’ Church Women’s Auxiliary, *The Art of Cooking in St. John’s* (c.a. 1960): n.p.

...no matter what model you choose, you'll enjoy perfect *Cooking and Baking* Results.⁴⁹

Newfoundlanders were also inundated with the modern products of the mainland. Shirriff's Flavourings were used by smart housewives all over Newfoundland, as their supplier Gerald S. Doyle Ltd proclaimed.⁵⁰ Packaged cold cereal made for quite a story when it first appeared in one community, as Tizzard recalls his grandfather's experience:

He said that one morning they brought in his breakfast and there was something on his tray, they called a new kind of cereal, and the only thing he could compare it to was shavings. The nurse told him it was cornflakes and with sugar and milk added it was real good...they had never seen anything like it.⁵¹

The appeal of many of these products was in their newness and novelty, but there were also deeper social and practical implications for these new foods.

Role of Women and the Rise of Middle Class Ideal

Participating in these channels of consumerism was increasingly more important to one's identity and social status. For women in particular, convenience foods offered the ability to appear more modern since they were no longer stuck with old-fashioned labour intensive cooking methods of a previous generation. Moreover, it became socially acceptable to not cook from scratch.⁵² The rise of the middle class ideal that consumerism embodied was certainly evident. Women were

⁴⁹ United Church Girls Club, *Corner Brook's Favourite Recipes* (1948): 290

⁵⁰ Home and School Association of Gander Academy, *Cookbook from Gander: recipes collected from the best cooks at the crossroads of the world* (1958): n.p.

⁵¹ Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 76.

⁵² Inness, *Secret Ingredients*, 18-19.

presented with an image of femininity and “correct” behaviour that many found impossible to achieve. The idea of the happy housewife, who received the utmost satisfaction tending to domestic duties was slowly changing due to the second wave feminist movement and popular writings such as Betty Friedan’s *The Feminist Mystique* (1963).⁵³ However, women remained the main cooks in their homes. Into the late 1970s housewives were considered the “major purchasing agent” for food products within their homes.⁵⁴ Cookbook researcher, Anne L. Bower, argues that while women were still denied full political and property rights in the early twentieth century, they held significant power to determine success or failure in the marketplace.⁵⁵ Manufacturers certainly sought to use this to their advantage, appealing to women through food promotion. Brand names became synonymous with various food items. Sunshine and Primrose were two types of margarine common in households, “the Sunshine having the edge over the other.”⁵⁶ Royal Yeast replaced the homemade version of barm made from hops.⁵⁷ Far from being solely about appearance, convenience foods also offered a practical alternative for the many women who entered the workplace and attempted to balance domestic duties with those of their employment. Furthermore, the convenience foods were true time savers for many women.

⁵³ Inness, *Secret Ingredients*, 62.

⁵⁴ James G. Barnes, *A Study of per capita Consumption of Certain Food Products in Newfoundland and Labrador*, ed. Michael J. Handrigan (St. John’s, NL: Newfoundland and Labrador Development Corporation Ltd, 1976): 2.

⁵⁵ Anne L. Bower, “Our Sisters’ Recipes: Exploring “community” in a community cookbook,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 31, no. 3 (1997): 147.

⁵⁶ Hussey, *Our Life on Lear’s Room*, 27.

⁵⁷ Margaret, *fish & brewis, toutens & tales*, 105.

Cooking literature supported this change in society as many recipe books moved from recipes based on whole ingredients and lengthy cook times to ones that combined an array of prepared items together or sped up the cooking process for others. Newfoundland housewives contributed their “updated” recipes to a multitude of community cookbooks, reflecting the latest trends. This recipe for “Casserole” is one such example:

1 pkg. Kraft Dinner	2 Tbsp H. P. Sauce
1 can corn Niblets	1 onion, sliced fine
1 can mushroom soup	½ c. sliced green pepper
1 15 oz can spaghetti sauce (with mushrooms)	1 c. chopped celery
1 ½ lb minced steak	1 Tbsp curry
	½ tsp salt

Prepare Kraft Dinner by pkg. directions. Brown onions and green pepper in butter or margarine. Add steak and brown. Add celery, salt and H. P. Sauce. Use a large casserole or two small ones. Place layer of Kraft Dinner on bottom, the niblets, soup, spaghetti sauce, meat and repeat. Over last layer sprinkle grated cheese. Sliced tomatoes may be used for decoration. Bake at 300 degrees for 1 ½ hours. Serve hot. (Can be frozen). Serves 8 to 10 people.⁵⁸

This contrasts notably with the 1930 edition of the Ladies College Aid Society Cookbook which featured a recipe for catsup made from scratch and the following “exceptionally good” Codfish salad recipe based on whole ingredients:

Boiled salted codfish, spread on a dish.
Sliced boiled potatoes.
Sliced boiled eggs.
Sliced boiled or raw onions.
Sliced fresh tomatoes.
Lettuce.
Olive Oil.
Vinegar.

⁵⁸ Unit “D” United Church Women, *The Art of Cooking in Grand Bank* (ca. 1970): 37.

Served Cold.⁵⁹

Recipes were also adapted to accommodate store-bought ingredients. A recipe for Hert Tarts, for example, was commonly made with fresh wild blueberries, but could also be used for making pies with store-bought fillings like dried apples and apricots.⁶⁰ Recipes were adapted to changing ingredients, as well as changes in technology and skill level. Early recipe books contained little instruction and often used the words “low oven” or “slow oven” to denote temperature, assuming anyone reading the books would be aware of how to adjust their stove (most likely coal or wood burning) appropriately. By mid-century, there is emphasis on exact instructions, specific temperatures and cook time. This reflects the modernization of kitchen appliances which reflects a more scientific approach experienced in broader society.

Tradition versus Modernity

To consider food in history we must consider “not only what foods were available but also what food choices individuals made.”⁶¹ This task proves challenging at best, and at times, impossible. Ascertaining the degree to which Newfoundlanders embraced the modernization of their food supply is no doubt difficult. There would certainly have been variation across the island. Larger urban

⁵⁹ Ladies College Aid Society of the United Church, *The L.C.A.S. Cookbook: arranged from tried and proven recipes* (St. John's, NL: Dicks & Co. Ltd, 1930): 28.

⁶⁰ Margaret, *fish & brewis, toutens & tales*, 125.

⁶¹ Fitzgerald and Petrick, “In Good Taste,” 398.

centres, like St. John's, Corner Brook and Grand Falls would likely have experienced more variation and growth in the availability of commercial products. There was also likely variation among products. Bread, for instance, was a stalwart of home cooking in Newfoundland. A 1970s survey reported that 60 per cent of respondents continued to eat home-baked bread.⁶² Commercially produced bread was long-resisted, especially in rural areas of the province, making only small inroads in the market by the mid-twentieth century. By the early 1960s there were 12 commercial bakeries in Newfoundland, and a representative from one of them, Mammy's in St. John's, told a reporter that "Newfoundland is the last stronghold of home baking goods in Canada...and, each year, more and more people are turning to the 'tailor made' loaf rather than the homemade item."⁶³ These manufactured loaves never reached equality with the homemade loaf – instead they were referred to with derision as "baker's bread" or "baker's fog" as a reference to the perceived lack of freshness and taste.⁶⁴

For those who continued to make bread at home, there were modern methods adopted liked pre-packaged yeast and self-rising flours. Bread-making, a process that used to take hours and overnight to complete, could now be accomplished in a fraction of the time using a recipe like the following 1958 one for Family White Bread:

2 packages or cakes of yeast
½ lukewarm water

⁶² Gray, "Traditional Newfoundland Foodways," 131.

⁶³ "Bakeries", *The Newfoundland Journal of Commerce*, October 1960, 30.

⁶⁴ *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, 2nd ed., s.v. "baker's fog."

1 teaspoon granulated sugar
4 cups liquid (milk or powdered milk and water)
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
1 tablespoon salt
2 tablespoons shortening or margarine
15 cups (approximately) sifted Cream of the West flour

Dissolve yeast in lukewarm water to which sugar has been added. Let stand for 10 minutes. Heat liquid, sugar, salt and shortening. Cool to lukewarm. Add dissolved yeast.

Add 6 cups of flour and beat until it bubbles. Add more flour to make a dough which is just stiff enough to be handled. Knead for about 10 minutes on a lightly floured board.

Let rise, covered, until doubled in bulk. Then, break down the air bubbles and divide into loaf size pieces. Shape and put into greased bread pans. Cover lightly and let rise until doubled in bulk. Bake at 350F. for one hour.⁶⁵

Ingredients and appliances that made cooking easier would have appealed to many.

As stoves fueled by gas or electricity were introduced, temperature control became possible, along with recipes based on exact temperatures and baking times.

Eventually, these stoves would replace the wood stoves so common in

Newfoundland kitchens and turn cooking into more of a science than an intuitive act.

Butter is another good example of the benefits of modernization. The process of making butter from scratch could be long and tedious. Several individuals have documented the hours it took to milk the cows, scald the cream, let it set, churn the cream, and let it set again before it was ready to consume.⁶⁶ Industrial production of

margarine was well underway within Newfoundland prior to Confederation. And

⁶⁵ *A Treasury of Newfoundland Dishes*, first edition (St. John's, NL: The Maple Leaf Milling Company, 1958): 7.

⁶⁶ Margaret, *fish & brewis, toutens & tales*, 98; Keough, *The Slender Thread*, 100.

while producers Harvey-Brehm expressed some concerns with imports, they remained confident in their sales and ability to appeal to the local market.⁶⁷ In fact, Newfoundland margarine and the continuation of its production and use in Newfoundland was protected in the terms of Confederation.⁶⁸ Clearly many were interested in replacing strictly home-made goods for store-bought and manufactured versions when the case for convenience outweighed that of tradition.

Yet modernity came with a price. The introduction of cash into the outport economy had significant impacts as it increased the outport middle class and altered rural social structures. Despite increases in income, many working-class and fishing families could not afford many of the convenience and store-bought products that came into the shops. The promises of an industrialized province made by the Smallwood government ultimately failed. By 1963, the average minimum wage per hour was 70 cents for men and 50 cents for women.⁶⁹ A decade later, small improvements were seen as minimum wage increased to \$1.40 per hour for men and \$1.10 per hour for women.⁷⁰ This, of course, does not include individual fishing families or those individuals who were self-employed, as they continued to be more vulnerable to fluctuations in the market and seasonal round of economic activities. An ad from the 1960s prices fast-food chicken at \$3.75 for a family size bucket,

⁶⁷ PANL MG 39 Box 4 File 1, Manager's Report on Margarine Sales, April 25, 1936.

⁶⁸ Welf H. Heick, "Margarine in Newfoundland History," *Newfoundland Studies*, 2, no. 1 (1986): 35.

⁶⁹ Newfoundland Statistics Agency, "Table D-4: Minimum Wage Rate for Employees Newfoundland and Labrador 1953 to 1985," *Historical Statistics of Newfoundland and Labrador* (St. John's, NL: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1988): 65.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

requiring some to cash in half a day's wages for one restaurant meal.⁷¹ Traditional foods thus remained more of a common diet for those of lower economic means. Even the more well-to-do families often complained about the cost of living as merchant Derrick Bowring lamented in a letter to his mother that "we live in the top of luxury comparatively speaking but we certainly pay for it! Eg...milk 30¢ quart meat 65-85¢ per pound and everything else in proportion."⁷² This financial strain, whether real or exaggerated continued into the 1960s when again Bowring writes that he is unable to send his mother a birthday cake as they were watching every penny.⁷³ Many families continued to rely on staple food products or utilized convenience foods in formats which were more economical, such as canned fruits and vegetables, which could replace more expensive fresh (imported) items.

While some thought modernization was the answer in the quest for progress, many others wrestled with the pull of tradition. Food traditions and methods held on even as microwaves and frozen French fries entered people's homes. The Maple Leaf Milling Company dedicated their popular cookbook, *A Treasury of Newfoundland Dishes*, to "all who savour the tang of an honest dish and who look fondly on the traditions of our island."⁷⁴ There is a sense of loss echoed in the memoir literature when it comes to food tradition. This nostalgia even extends to the changes in the act of grocery shopping. As Maurice Burke wrote:

⁷¹ St. Thomas' Church Women's Auxiliary, *The Art of Cooking in St. John's* (c.a. 1960): n.p.

⁷² COLL-157 1.01.011, Letter from Derrick Bowring to Mother, September 24, 1945.

⁷³ COLL-157 1.01.028, Letter from Derrick Bowring to Mother, October 25, 1962.

⁷⁴ *A Treasury of Newfoundland Dishes* (St. John's, NL: The Maple Leaf Milling Company, 1958).

In those years we weren't used to many of the fancy foods of today...And so the staple foods were beans, split peas, macaroni and cheese, bologna, tinned beef...salt beef and other old faithfuls which made up our simple yet nutritious diet...Today in a modern supermarket you will take a cart and pick out flour, salt, molasses and other items all neatly packaged for your convenience, but somehow this business-like way of doing things cannot compare with the adventurous visits to the Flour Store, the Salt Store and the Molasses Store.⁷⁵

This depersonalization of society was chronicled in The Wonderful Grand Band's 1981 song, "Babylon Mall." Its lyrics suggest the wasteful nature of modernization: "disappear into Woolco without a trace/ Buy it, take it home and then throw it away/Cash and carry credit card consumer craze."⁷⁶ Contrasting this image is the memory of Greta Hussey and the simplicity in meals and fondness for traditional cooking. Writing about a trip to Labrador, she reflected: "writing this, in fancy I can see the galley now and smell the delicious aromas which emitted from there. There was salt beef not cooked too soft, and spuds with the skin on, shiny from the fat of the meat."⁷⁷

Foods that many were accustomed to eating, including salt beef dinners, fish and brewis, seal, capelin and other wild ingredients continued to make an appearance in cooking literature. These recipes were now often relegated to a "traditional" or "old-fashioned" section of the book, while other recipes were more in keeping with broader modern trends. Certain dishes gained national reputation as "Newfoundland delicacies," even as many Newfoundlanders struggled with defining

⁷⁵ Maurice Burke, *Memories of Outport Life* (St. John's, NL: Creative Publishers, 1985): 18, 19.

⁷⁶ The Wonderful Grand Band, "Babylon Mall," *Living in a Fog*, 1981. <https://youtu.be/VFIXApx-nf0>

⁷⁷ Hussey, *Our Life on Lear's Room*, 4.

their own food culture. For instance, seal flippers were often written about as a uniquely Newfoundland dish. Journalist Anthony Ayre noted that the flipper pie “means as much to the Newfie as Haggis to the Scot.”⁷⁸ The battle between modernization and traditional foods would continue for many years.

Newfoundlanders continued to be pulled from the sea toward North American habits, tastes and values throughout the twentieth century.⁷⁹ Many came to increasingly rely on packaged convenience foods as an easy alternative to home prepared meals. However, despite the considerable changes to the variety of commercially prepared foods available, a distinction between these foods and home-cooked foods continued, and a preference for the latter remained evident.

⁷⁸ Anthony Green Ayre, “Flipper Pie – A National Dish,” *Family Herald and Weekly Star* (May 5, 1948): 46.

⁷⁹ Gulliver, “Preserving the Best,” 42.

Chapter 3 – “There’s Gonna Be A Time Tonight”

As early as the thirteenth or fourteenth century, prior to the invention of printing, cookbooks in manuscript form were circulating throughout Europe.¹ Cookbooks evolved to include professional texts, personal manuscripts and community-based publications. As gender and feminist social historians began to consider the various roles of women during the 1960s and 1970s, they focused new attention on cookbooks as historical texts. As Arjun Appadurai notes, cookbooks “tell unusual cultural tales” about the role food plays in the societies which produce them.² Appadurai explains, cookbooks “combine the sturdy pragmatic virtues of all manuals with the vicarious pleasures of the literature of the senses.”³ More than instructions for how to cook or prepare meals, they “reflect shifts in the boundaries of edibility, the proprieties of the culinary process, the logic of meals, the exigencies of the household budget, the vagaries of the market, and the structure of domestic ideologies.”⁴ Over time it is apparent that readers in each era had changing understandings of how these books would look, what their purpose and function should be and who might contribute.⁵ For historians, cookbooks are unique in that they prescribe to the reader, and only secondarily describe what the author may

¹ Jean-Louis Flandrin, “Introduction: The Early Modern Period,” in *Food: A Culinary History*, eds. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 325.

² Arjun Appadurai, “How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, no. 1 (1988): 3.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Janet Theophano, *Eat My Words: Reading Women’s Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 14.

have actually done.⁶ Janet Theophano, a leading authority on cookbooks as historical artifacts, suggests that researchers need to look beyond the utilitarian and aesthetic aspects of cooking literature and to seek its “expressive potential.”⁷ This is particularly true when attempting to see the changing roles of women and to see food trends over time. Theophano’s work highlights the use of cookbooks in creating tradition, legacy and community. She contends that writing gives recipes, and therefore food memories, a type of permanence; they become embedded within a group culture and continue to shape the group’s identity.⁸ Cooking literature is infused with the themes of life and death, youth and age, faithfulness and betrayal, memory and forgetfulness. Theophano summarizes the inherent meaning in cooking:

A longing for the pleasures of the table reflects a concern for balance and harmony and an integration of the physical and spiritual nature of our existence...Preparing a dish or a meal is not merely an effort to satisfy physical hunger, but often a quest for the good life.⁹

A critical evaluation and reading of cookbooks can provide significant insight into how food cultures develop.

The fundraising cookbook, produced exclusively by women until very recently, traces its roots to the American Civil War Era.¹⁰ Since that time, it has evolved to be a popular community project of church groups, schools, and social groups. In 1981, archivist Lynne Ireland wrote “The Compiled Cookbook as

⁶ Boles, “Stirring Constantly,” 61.

⁷ Theophano, *Eat My Words*, 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 6, 7.

¹⁰ Bower, “*Our Sisters’ Recipes*,” 137.

Foodways Autobiography,” setting the stage for future research on community cookbooks. Ireland’s main argument is that these cookbooks can be viewed as autobiographies of a community, because unlike commercial cookbooks, which are meant to influence consumption, community-based books often reflect what is eaten in the home and make a statement about the groups that produce them.¹¹ Nussel writes that the foodways found in community cookbooks “bind individuals together, define the limits of the group’s identity, serve as a medium of communication, celebrate cultural cohesion, and provide a context for ritual performance.”¹² Community cookbooks identify and enforce social boundaries and norms. In this manner, these cookbooks show what people were cooking in a place and time and how they thereby, created the society around them.

Gray claimed that people in outport Newfoundland “almost certainly did not indulge in the use of cookbooks” due to illiteracy.¹³ While oral traditions played a significant role in Newfoundland food traditions, they were by no means the only source of proscriptive cooking literature available to rural Newfoundlanders. Gray appears to have ignored the highly popular community cookbooks, produced by many churches and social organizations across Newfoundland and reaching back into the very early twentieth century. Furthermore, many families accessed publications such as the *Family Herald* and newspapers which all carried recipes and

¹¹ Lynne Ireland, “The Compiled Cookbook as Foodways Autobiography,” *Western Folklore* 40, no. 1 (1981), 108.

¹² Nussel, “Heating Up the Sources,” 958.

¹³ Gray, “Traditional Newfoundland Foodways,” 33.

cooking advice for housewives. Therefore, these sources of cooking literature must be examined to determine how food tradition was created and shaped through the twentieth century. Reading these literary works against the grain and considering the contributors, the advertising, the style of writing, and what is included and what is left out provides even further insight into tensions which are inherent in resolving the age-old problem of feeding oneself and others.

Celebratory Food and Entertaining

Foods have been long associated with celebratory feasts and important life events – like births, weddings and funerals. Over time, particular foods become synonymous with certain events and subconsciously signal an individual of their importance. Newton has argued that Jell-O for many Americans calls into memory social gatherings ranging from funerals and weddings to baby showers, Christmas and church suppers.¹⁴ Pilcher echoes this sentiment in his examination of Mexican food traditions. He determined that tortillas sufficed for everyday fare, but on festive occasions women molded the dough, twisting and pleating it, into delicate and elaborate tamales.¹⁵ Newfoundland's many celebrations and gatherings certainly inspired the developing food tradition. The unique word "scoff" used to denote a large meal is often associated with a social gathering with the meal itself being a display of entertainment and social standing. Pope's work has shown that early

¹⁴ Newton, "The Jell-O Syndrome," 251.

¹⁵ Pilcher, "Tamales or Timbales," 197.

settlers and migratory fishers often used alcohol as prestations to create social obligations among peers and among superiors.¹⁶ These connotations continued to be apparent through the twentieth century.

Reflecting the pre-existing trends, by the mid-twentieth century much of the prescriptive cooking literature was written with entertaining in mind. The recipes were designed to allow the cook to demonstrate a certain level of skill and social grace when providing food for guests. With the introduction of convenience foods, some food trends became common in many parts of North America, including Newfoundland. Gelatin salads, for example, were quite popular for entertaining, and multiple varieties are found in a majority of cookbooks for the 1950 to 1975 period. One of the more common ones appears to be a version of a Pineapple Jellied Salad, the following contributed by Mrs. B.M. Penny from *Little Seldom Come By*:

1 pkg. lemon jelly	1 tin crushed pineapple (drained)
2 tablespoons mayonaise	1 cup grated raw carrot
1 cup grated cabbage	1 tsp. vinegar & pinch of salt

Set jelly, grate carrot and cabbage. When jelly is almost set add 1 tspn. Vinegar & pinch of salt. Add grated carrot & Cabbage & pineapple. Mix well together, add salad dressing, [p]ut in refrigerator to set.¹⁷

Cookbooks also offered suggestions for larger parties. For example, these offerings for finger foods at a cocktail party:

¹⁶ Peter Pope, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012): 398.

¹⁷ Ivan F. Jespersen, ed. *Fat-Back & Molasses: A Collection of Favourite Old Recipes from Newfoundland & Labrador* (St. John's, NL: Jespersen Publishing, 1974; reprint, St. John's, NL: Jespersen Publishing, 2014): 62.

Wrap a half slice of bacon around any of the following: fasten with cocktail pick and broil: stuffed olives, oysters, fresh shrimp, or prunes stuffed with peanut butter

Roll pineapple chunks in softened cream cheese, then in chopped mint leaves.

Ritz biscuits spread with peanut butter; top with marshmallow and browned in oven.¹⁸

In their efforts to modernize, many Newfoundlanders linked the past with present trends in entertainment. Garden parties and other gatherings had been a part of the Newfoundland social landscape prior to the twentieth century. The famous kitchen parties and the Kelligrews Soiree are just a couple of examples of the interaction between people, music and food. Entertaining - whether on a small or grander scale - was an important part of self-identity and community connection. Some communities had unique celebrations, like August 15, known as "Lady Day" in St. Leonard's. As Margaret recalls, the Garden Party for Lady Day was the prime event, attracting people from all around the area to participate in games and celebrations, and partake of generous meals:

The women served teas and dinners all through the day. Tables were set up in the hall where the women proudly displayed their donations of baked goods. Long tables covered with fancy cloths and vases of fresh flowers were reserved for those who wished to dine. There were dishes of cold meats, tureens of hot meat and gravy, varieties of home-made bread and fancy biscuits. Cakes came as a special donation from each settlement and were swathed in foamy white frosting, decorated with 'tens-of-thousands' and 'silver shot' and displayed on cut glass plates.¹⁹

¹⁸ United Church Girls' Club Cook Book (1948): 32.

¹⁹ Margaret, *fish & brewis, toutens & tales*, 8.

Some other occasions were more traditional - like the widespread Orangemen's Day celebrations. Aubrey Tizzard provides this description from Notre Dame Bay:

I know very well that the Orangemen's 'time' was the greatest event not only of the winter but of the whole year...the Orangemen, numbering anywhere between sixty-five and eighty...would parade to the United Church with sashes, aprons and swords in great display...As children we went back to the hall to wait so impatiently for the Orangemen to return, and watched as the ladies prepared the tables with food. And there really was a lot of food put on those tables. Canned corned beef, pickles, bread, buns and cakes. It really made us boys hungry just looking at that table, but we had to wait.²⁰

Whether it was a church event, wedding or funeral, food was essential. For example, the December 1973 Topsail United Church Newsletter highlighted their annual Christmas "mug-up."²¹ Community cookbooks supported these efforts by providing recipes and menus for cooking for large crowds. A sampling of these recipes includes "Baked Beans for 100", "Cabbage Salad for 175" and this "Ham Supper for 225":

48 lb. canned ham	2 qt. Milk
24 potato salads (solicited)	1 lb. Crisco
5 lb. coffee	5 to 6 c. water
1 pt. cream	48 pkg. peas
45 qt. strawberries	8 qt. milk
6 pkg. Bisquick equals	6 qt. heavy cream
¾-inch biscuits	1 pkg Starlac
	1 c. sugar added to
	Bisquick ²²

While the large community events may have attracted the most attention, food was very much a part of smaller social gatherings and intimate family events.

²⁰ Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 124, 125, 126.

²¹ MG 685, Box 1, File 3 – Butler-Miller Papers

²² Anglican Church Women's Association, *Home Cooking Secrets of Kelligrews*, n.d., ca. 1970: h.

Socializing with food and drink was the prerogative across class hierarchies. The National Film Board's *Fogo Island Film* series depicted several examples of community celebrations. In *A Wedding and Party* from Joe Batts Arm North, a hall is filled with the sounds of accordion music and images of people dancing. Amongst the revelry, the kettles are boiling and the centerpiece of the event is the lavishly decorated three-tiered wedding cake.²³ *Jim Decker's Party* is a similar display of happy party goers in Jim's home, drinking India Beer and belting out the song "We'll rant and we'll roar like true Newfoundlanders."²⁴ Considered among the upper class, the Bowring Family also document many parties and dinners hosted for friends and colleagues. In letters to his mother, Derrick Bowring reports having hosted a "preliminary gathering at the house for a buffet supper for 16" as well as having "organized a party for a drink and a meal" at their home before a sailing club dance.²⁵ Many families enjoyed religious holidays as a time of celebration and a break from labour. Christmas, for example, was a well-loved holiday with visiting friends and relatives a central feature. In *Salt Pan* it was described by Tizzard thusly:

Whenever the visit occurred it was an accepted idea that the table be spread with all the delicacies that go with Christmas; tea – good strong tea, without milk...two kinds of bread, plain and raisin. Butter would be Newfoundland-made margarine; we sometimes had sugar but generally molasses. There would be XXX Soda Biscuits as well as cheese, and above all the two kinds of Christmas cake, dark and light.

²³ *A Wedding and Party*, directed by Colin Low (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 1967), https://www.nfb.ca/film/wedding_and_party.

²⁴ *Jim Decker's Party*, directed by Colin Low (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 1967), https://www.nfb.ca/film/jim_deckers_party/

²⁵ COLL-157, 1.01.028, December 1, 1962 and COLL-157, 1.01.028, November 22, 1962.

The table would be spread as for a regular meal, and conversation would usually continue throughout the meal by the older people...²⁶

There are many recipes in the cookbooks of the period to suggest the popularity of homemade beverages. These were both alcoholic and non-alcoholic and appeared to play an important role in parties and community events. These beverages were commonly made from wild ingredients and were meant to stretch meagre quantities of store-bought ingredients like sugar or spirits. Spruce beer, noted by travellers in the early 1800s as a preferred drink on the island, remained common into the twentieth century.²⁷ It was referred to as a favourite of Garden Parties, and two glasses could be bought for 5 cents in the 1960s.²⁸ Another favourite was Ginger Beer²⁹, along with blueberry and dandelion wine. Food and social gatherings go hand in hand. For many, these times were a change of pace from work and day-to-day living. The focus was on family, friends and the community as a whole. The foods which came to be associated with celebrations were reserved for those occasions to signify the separation from party food meant to impress and the daily fare within a household.

²⁶ Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 102.

²⁷ Anspach, *History of the Island of Newfoundland*, 466

²⁸ Margaret, *fish & brewis, toutens & tales*, 99.

²⁹ PANL MG 685 Box 1 File 7: Butler-Miller of Topsail, "Recipes"

Recipes as Prescriptive Literature and What to Feed Families

What to feed oneself and one's family is an age-old question. Prescriptive literature in the form of cookbooks and magazine articles tried to help the overwhelmed cook create dishes that were nutritional and appetizing. As food became more industrialized, these recipes reflected the use of convenience foods for everyday cookery. Many recipes from the mid-twentieth century feature concoctions of convenience foods or "dump and serve" style of dishes. Michael and Jane Stern lament the 1960s food trends:

If there is a single generalization to be made about the cuisine of suburbia it is that it consists of things made from other things: soups turned into dips and casseroles, steaks cubed to form kabobs; graham crackers transformed into S'mores; Pepsi-Cola Cake and Ritz Pecan Pie.³⁰

Food was meant to give the impression that the cook, most often the mother or wife of the household, had exerted effort and time to create the dish. One example, a "Mock Scallop" recipe from circa 1970 uses halibut, coated and fried to replicate the look and texture of the costlier scallops.³¹ The following recipe for "Cocktail Squares" from Fogo Island is a prime example of combing pre-packaged foods into a servable treat:

Mix 30 single Graham crackers and ½ cup butter & spread on bottom of pan & bake 20 minutes at 325F. Cool. For the TOP: use 1 large tin of fruit cocktail well drained, 1 tin Eagle Brand milk & juice of 1 lemon. Mix fruit, milk, lemon together & spread over cooled crust. Bake 20 minutes at 325F. Cool. Spread over with whipped cream or Dream

³⁰ Michael Stern and Jane Stern, *Square Meals* (New York: Knopf, 1984): 296.

³¹ M[a]ria Regina Ladies Committee, *The Art of Cooking in Port au Port East* (ca. 1970): n.p.

Whip. Sprinkle with graham crackers broken up & keep in refrigerator.³²

And should guests stop in unexpectedly, one could jazz up a variety of canned ingredients to make a meal. Soups in particular could be doctored up in this way:

1 tin Campbell's Pepper Pot Soup
1 tin Campbell's Tomato Soup
2 soup tins of milk
Heat and serve very hot.³³

These, and similar recipes, appear repeatedly in various fashions in cookbooks from across North America, including Newfoundland. As Ireland posited, the repetitive nature of recipes denotes what dishes are trendy, commonly consumed and popular.³⁴

Another tendency reflective of wider North American and mid-twentieth century food trends was the increased use of refined sugar and sweetened desserts. Cakes, cookies, pies, squares and other treats dominated the cookbooks between 1948 and 1972. Based on a simple quantitative analysis of a sample of community cookbooks available at Memorial University's Centre for Newfoundland Studies, 53% of recipes are for desserts of some kind.³⁵ A few cookbooks have even higher percentages, from 60-65% of the recipes being for desserts or sweetened foods.³⁶

³² Jespersen, *Fat-Back & Molasses*, 139.

³³ United Church Girls' Club Cook Book (1948): 42.

³⁴ Ireland, "The Compiled Cookbook as Foodways Autobiography," 110.

³⁵ A quantitative analysis was conducted by the author on a sampling of 25 community cookbooks available at Memorial University's Centre for Newfoundland Studies. The cookbooks were from various communities across Newfoundland. A count was taken of main categories, including sweets, fish, salads, vegetables and meat dishes and compared with total number of recipes.

³⁶ These include: *The Art of Cooking in Clarks Head* (1970), *Centennial Cookbook* (1967) and *The Art of Cooking in St. John's* (circa 1960).

Lynne Ireland has used similar quantitative analysis on recipes from thirty-five mid-West American cookbooks with comparable results. She determined that 50% of the recipes are sweets in some form – pies, cookies, cakes and desserts.³⁷ This speaks to the increase in sugar consumption among many North Americans. Desserts were not new; early cookbooks also have cakes and cookies as part of their compilation. However, many of these were sweetened with dried fruits or molasses. Boiled

Molasses Cake is one example:

4 cups flour	2 cups molasses
1 cup butter	1 cup sour milk
1 cup raisins	1 cup currants
½ cup citron	2 eggs
2 tsps allspice	2 tsps mixed spice
2 tsps soda	

Put the molasses, fruit, butter and spices in a saucepan. Heat to the boiling point and allow to cool.

Sift soda with the flour and add to the fruit mixture. Then add the beaten eggs and milk.

Bake for 2 hours in a covered iron pot in a medium hot oven.³⁸

Later recipes used more refined sugars and put emphasis on the richness of the dessert or cookie. See for instance, the following list of ingredients for a classic Ice

Box Cookie:

1 cup butter or shortening	1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup brown sugar	2 eggs, beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla	¼ teaspoon salt
3 ½ cups sifted Cream of the West Flour	
1 teaspoon baking soda	1 cup chopped nuts

³⁷ Ireland, "The Compiled Cookbook as Foodways Autobiography," 109.

³⁸ Margaret, *fish & brewis, toutens & tales*, 115.

1 tablespoon caraway seeds³⁹

One of the reasons for the increase in refined sugar consumption was the increased availability of such products. Tye observed that by the mid-twentieth century molasses had been replaced by white and brown sugar in much of Atlantic Canada.⁴⁰ Furthermore, manufacturers of sugar and flour often produced and sold or distributed cookbooks with their products. Therefore, recipes would often read “3 cups of Cream of the West” in lieu of the generic “3 cups of flour.” In addition, these recipes are more reflective of foods for entertaining and celebration rather than comprising a part of the everyday diet. Tye elaborates on the recipes from this time period:

They depend on refined products such as white flour and white sugar and use lots of eggs. The cakes, cookies, and loaves produced are not usually dark in colour but are light in both texture and appearance. Cookies are not quickly dropped on a baking sheet but are carefully cut out in neat shapes. They convey the message that food should be tidy and contained. There is no room for messiness here.⁴¹

These recipes were for display and dainty consumption, rather than reflective of household cooking. Since these recipes were not in common use, they needed to be recorded to be used instead of cooked from memory as more traditional and commonly made foods would be.

Cookbooks were not the only source of prescriptive cooking literature available to Newfoundlanders. Popular magazines, newspapers, radio and television

³⁹ *A Treasury of Newfoundland Dishes*, first edition (St. John's, NL: The Maple Leaf Milling Company, 1958): 40.

⁴⁰ Tye, *Baking as Biography*, 64.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 113.

all attempted to teach women how and what to cook. In a 1970 *Decks Awash* article, Catherine O'Brien remarked that a general complaint in Newfoundland was that fish was an unpopular food and was cooked in very few ways.⁴² The cause of this, O'Brien declared was that "most Newfoundland women tend to overcook fish and consequently this is one of the main reasons that fish is generally unpopular with so many."⁴³ O'Brien, a worker for the Federal Department of Fisheries, may have failed to notice the historical roots of fish in Newfoundland or its use in a number of family-style meals. Fish was considered a family food and consequently it was not considered a festive food, and usually not served to guests, especially strangers.⁴⁴

Perhaps seeking to improve the variety of Newfoundlanders' diet, O'Brien returned to *Decks Awash* with her article "1001 ways to eat fish" in 1974.⁴⁵ Like many authors of 'how-to' cooking guides, O'Brien placed the blame for poor taste and nutrition on the woman of the household. Prescriptive cooking literature often spoke directly to the "housewife" or "mother" as the one responsible for not only ensuring her family is fed, but also that the food they were served was nutritional, satisfying and tasty. Despite the trend towards modernization, some of the literature in Newfoundland suggested returning to nature as a way to increase health and vitality. For instance, one source suggested that dandelion greens may provide the

⁴² Catherine O'Brien, "Making Fish A Tempting Dish," *Decks Awash* 1, no. 4 (1970): 26.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Gray, "Traditional Newfoundland Foodways," 29.

⁴⁵ Cathy O'Brien, "1001 ways to eat fish," *Decks Awash* 3, no. 6 (1974): 44.

answer to “eat one green leafy or yellow vegetable every day” especially after winter supplies have dwindled.⁴⁶

As the middle of the twentieth century wore on, women received messages from all sorts of advice experts on cookery. The food industry pushed for the use of modern products and technologies that were meant to free women from time spent in the kitchen. However, this was commonly contradicted by the portrayal of a housewife lovingly preparing food for her family. Often this led to confusion and exacerbation from the competing interests:

The homemaker must know how to plan her family’s meals: Nutritionists, Health Educators, the radio and press all try to convince her that her choice of food for her family will largely determine not only their good health but also their good looks!...Another is the loudly expressed opinion that women were made for better things than household drudgery – equip her with a can opener and a fried fish shop around the corner and her life will blossom like a rose.⁴⁷

As the second-wave feminist movement began to take hold, arguing for equal rights in workplaces and society in general, an additional ideological battle was happening in homes and kitchens and centered on the most basic question of what to make for dinner

Feminist Movement – Challenging the Domestic Ideal

The prescriptive cooking literature of the mid-twentieth century was filled with recipes designed to convey a specific image about the cook, usually the woman

⁴⁶ Ella M. Brett, “Good Food for Good Health,” *Atlantic Guardian*, 7, no. 6 (1950): 64.

⁴⁷ Ella M. Brett, “Good Food for Good Health,” *Atlantic Guardian* 7, no. 5 (1950): 54-55.

of the household. Cookbooks were “explicit emblems of women’s relegation to the domestic sphere, maintaining institutionalized patriarchal systems and serving the core of that system.”⁴⁸ Women were expected to entertain family and friends as well as provide nutritious meals for their children and husbands. In this environment the “cult of true womanhood appears to have been revived, and women were once again put on the domestic pedestal.”⁴⁹ A cookbook from Corner Brook was prefaced with this very idea, that the recipes were meant to aid even the inexperienced cook prepare meals that were “both attractive and nourishing.”⁵⁰ Furthermore, women were often taught that cooking was a way, perhaps the most important way, to demonstrate their love for their families. As the following “Kitchen Prayer” from a circa 1970 Clark’s Head cookbooks highlights, cooking and feeding one’s family was near to godliness:

Lord of all pots and pans and things
Since I’ve not time to be a Saint, by doing lovely things –
Or watching late with Thee
Or dreaming in the dawn light – Or storming Heaven’s Gates.
Make me a Saint by getting meals and washing up the plates.
Warm all the kitchen with Thy love and light it with Thy peace.
Forgive me all my worrying and make my grumbling cease.
Thou who didst love to give men food in room or by sea,
Accept the service that I do – I do it unto Thee.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Nussel, “Heating Up the Sources,” 958.

⁴⁹ Hélène Le Dantec-Lowry, “Reading Women’s Lives in Cookbooks and Other Culinary Writings: A Critical Essay,” *Revue française d’études américaines* 2 (2008): 108.

⁵⁰ United Church Girls’ Club Cook Book (1948): Introduction.

⁵¹ Anglican Church Women, *The Art of Cooking in Clark’s Head* (ca. 1970): n.p.

It was normalized that women should want to cook for their families. Cookbooks, like the 1961 St. Mary's Anglican Young People's Association one, popularized this concept:

Know the greatest cooking secret of all? It's this: cooking without love is hard and tiresome work indeed. But cooking with love lets the cook taste joy in every dish. May you have such joy - always!⁵²

Women quite often felt torn between domestic duties and the changing landscape of responsibilities and opportunities available to them outside the home. Neuhaus has demonstrated that cultural representations of the "traditional" woman as "completely fulfilled by their roles as devoted and nurturing mothers" spoke to the expectations of society, but not necessarily the reality.⁵³

The rise of the middle-class and inherent tensions between the roles of men and women are evident in the prescriptive cooking literature of the time. Sociologist Arjun Appadurai leaves no question that women were predominately the cooks and providers of family meals in modern India. Cookbooks serve to reaffirm long-standing oral traditions of exchanging recipes among women by acting as a reference and memory aid to supplement the oral interaction.⁵⁴ Ferguson notes that cookbooks emphasize the "material, the gustatory, the domestic, and the creative." He goes on to argue that the purpose of this is to "regularize, inform, and inspire the women who are their presumed readers." But increasing numbers of women

⁵² St. Mary's Anglican Young People's Association Cookbook (St. John's, NL: 1961): n.p.

⁵³ Jessamyn Neuhaus, "The Way to a Man's Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s," *Journal of Social History* 32, no. 3 (1999): 537.

⁵⁴ Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine," 6-7.

struggled to perform paid work while also completing domestic duties, including cooking. By 1975, 31.2% of eligible females (over the age of 15) participated in the workforce in Newfoundland.⁵⁵ Within ten years, that number would rise to 42.6%.⁵⁶ As women became more involved in outside work, cooking no longer rated as a top priority for many. In a 1960s or 1970s handwritten book, entitled CAROL'S COOKING STINKS COOK BOOKS, 'Carol' reflects this tension between the domestic ideal and the reality of women's interests:

Dedicated to all my fellow 'ladies of the house' who would rather be reading, sleeping, drinking, and smoking, playing with the dog, the baby or her own belly button – *anything* – rather than face that what to have for dinner crisis everyday. But do it we must or feel so guilty!⁵⁷

Prior to the influence of second-wave feminism, many cookbooks reflected a strong sense of the 'cult of domesticity' and the accepted norm of women remaining in the private sphere. Carol, on the other hand, is very much a modern, middle-class American woman and reflects the challenges many women faced in attempting to be breadwinner, shopper, cook and house cleaner.⁵⁸ In this manner, cookbooks reinforced the notion of women as the natural cooks.

In Newfoundland, this notion that women were the natural-born cooks was long-lasting. A 1948 ad by the Corner Brook Local 64 International Brotherhood of

⁵⁵ Newfoundland Statistics Agency, "Table C-2 – Population 15 Years of Age and Over, Participation Rate, Labour Force, Employed, Unemployment Rate, Not In the Labour Force & Employment/Population Ratio for Males & Females Newfoundland and Labrador, 1975 to 1986," *Historical Statistics of Newfoundland and Labrador* (St. John's, NL: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1988): 47.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Theophano, *Eat My Words*, 147.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

Pulp, Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers for instance, provides this straightforward direction: "The Way to a Man's Heart is Through his Stomach so BE A GOOD COOK."⁵⁹ Appadurai coins the phrase "seductiveness of variety" to explain the ideological appeal of cookbooks to the new middle-class, urban woman who sought to mask "the pressures of social mobility, conspicuous consumption, and budgetary stress."⁶⁰ Neuhaus has demonstrated that cooking literature reveals the tensions over domestic roles. She argues that the overarching domestic ideal in 1950s America was often challenged and resisted by women through cookbooks. Neuhaus uses gender and discourse analysis to conclude that "although [cookbooks] may have urged their readers to pour their creative and intellectual energies into baking the perfect layer cake, [they] simultaneously revealed the tenuousness of the domestic ideal."⁶¹ Using the framework laid out by gender historians like Joan Scott⁶², Neuhaus is able to decipher the roles of women and men in creating food and the ways in which advertisers and cookbook producers used these concepts to reinforce stereotypes. Neuhaus posits that *because* the dominant discourse was to position women as the natural cooks, the language used often spoke to the very possibility that it was not a fulfilling activity for many women and therefore challenged the very ideal the cookbooks were promoting.⁶³

⁵⁹ United Church Girls' Club Cook Book (1948): 284.

⁶⁰ Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine," 10.

⁶¹ Neuhaus, "The Way to a Man's Heart," 531.

⁶² See Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986).

⁶³ Neuhaus, "The Way to a Man's Heart," 547.

Like all historical documents, cookbooks must be approached with a level of skepticism and an understanding of their original purpose, of who the author was, who the audience was and what goal the document was meant to achieve.

Researchers must also consider the archive itself and the choices made in preserving one text over another. Recipes can be representative of what the authors want their audience to *believe* is reality. The challenge for researchers is to ascertain what one *should* eat and what one *actually* ate. The difference between the ideal and reality is echoed in Jeffrey Pilcher's work on Mexico when he describes cookbooks as a way for male elites to use cuisine as a "symbol of the progressive western society they hoped to create" in post-colonial Mexico.⁶⁴ Pilcher is adamant, however, that these public representations of nationalist cuisine may have held little relevance for the majority of people, particularly women. This links back to the historical work on food industrialization and modernization and places cookbooks as "revealing artefacts of culture in the making."⁶⁵ Determining whether the recipes found in cookbooks are reflective of what their authors or audiences actually ate continues to be a central research question in the field. For Newfoundland food culture, cookbooks and other proscriptive cooking literature trace the tensions between modernity and tradition. Even as modern recipes dominate, the old favourites remain and are not eliminated from the literature. These foods and recipes became linked to a romantic vision of tradition and heritage.

⁶⁴ Pilcher, "Tamales or Timbales," 211.

⁶⁵ Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine," 22.

Chapter 4 – “God Guard Thee Newfoundland”

Growing up in Newfoundland, food was a big part of my own family and community life. When my parents and I moved to Ontario in the mid-1990s, I was exposed to a variety of food cultures I had never known. Yet at home, the foods of Newfoundland were ever present. One of the memories of my father is him admonishing me for being “too grand” to eat certain foods like Jiggs Dinner, fish and rabbit. I instead preferred the tastes and dishes of a global environment I was now a part of. My father was of the first generation of Newfoundland-born Canadians, and like many of his peers, he was determined to preserve, even in his small way, a uniqueness of the island culture he loved. My father was not a deft hand in the kitchen: he could make what I still consider the gold standard in doughboys and could fry a piece of bologna like world renowned chefs grilled filet mignon, but that was the extent of his repertoire. My mother was the cook, and she dutifully prepared the meals of her and my father’s childhood. While there are few wives and mothers that could compare with her dedication, my mother will agree that she lacked finesse and creativity when it came to meals. She replicated the simplicity of ‘meat and potatoes’ type meals that she had been taught. My own love of cooking became an eclectic combination of tv cooking shows, ethnic flavours and fine dining menus of North America. Yet, like so many children who leave the nest, it was the smells and sounds of my childhood that I longed for when needing comfort and a feeling of belonging. When my father died, I was the one who took his place in asking for my

mother's Jiggs Dinner, steamed blueberry puddings and pea soup with doughboys. Eating these foods connected me with my father, my ancestry and the many Newfoundlanders past and present who continually sought a link to "home."

To understand my food experiences, I turned to researching Newfoundland food culture. I wanted to learn why the food of Newfoundland, while not revered as haute cuisine and the envy of the world, continues to thrive and pull people together. As a food researcher, I have termed the preservation of Newfoundland food culture as the "rough food mystique." This phrase encompasses what I consider to be the motivation and underlying ideals which sought to preserve Newfoundland food culture from the modernization and influence of North American culture. Long after the necessity of hunting for seabirds, or eating salted meat and preserved vegetables passed, the use and enjoyment of these foods continued. By the 1960s and 1970s, many Newfoundlanders believed that too many changes had come to the island and it was losing its distinct cultural traditions. Some, like Overton, believed that a culture based on outports had been "undermined by industrialization, the welfare state, urbanization, and the introduction of North American values."¹ They argued that Newfoundland offered something unique and different to the rest of the world:

Newfoundland's history is Newfoundland's culture. The two are not, as they are for many nations, separable. What distinguishes us is what we have made and what we have kept...Apart from our very strong oral culture, all that we have had is a material culture - things made, things altered; a host of objects, customs and creations shaped by our

¹ James Overton, "A Newfoundland Culture?" *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 23 (1988): 9.

being here at the beginning of the New World and always clinging to the edge of its development.²

Material culture, symbols that can be heard, seen or felt, dominate Newfoundland heritage. Food is the prime example of material symbolism, with the ability to nourish both body and soul.

These symbols took on increased importance after Confederation as efforts to preserve the uniqueness of Newfoundland increased. An undercurrent of grief and loss was present for the generation born after Confederation. Even though they had not been the ones voting at the time, the impact was significant. Sandy Morris, a musician from St. John's, remembers the feeling of grief "over the fact everybody felt that we were ripped off...there was this whole undercurrent of shame and grief around the whole Confederation thing that you certainly felt[...]"³ As a result of the grief and pain, a general identity crisis appeared to play out. One of the reasons this identity crisis was so profound was that even the connection Newfoundlanders had felt with Great Britain was based, in part, on "manufactured and invented sentiment."⁴ Being cut adrift by the motherland and not quite accepting the relationship with Canada meant that many felt displaced and without a sense of who they were in the world. Gerald Pocius has argued that certain aspects of culture were selected and given symbolic value based on their distinctness as compared to

² Shane O'Dea, "Newfoundland: The Development of Culture on the Margin," *Newfoundland Studies* 10, no. 1 (1994): 73.

³ Mekaela Gulliver, "Preserving the Best," 42.

⁴ Pat Byrne, "Booze, Ritual, and the Invention of Tradition: The Phenomenon of the Newfoundland Screech-In," in *Usable Pasts: Traditions and Group Expressions in North America*, ed. Tad Tuleja (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1997): 234.

other cultures that Newfoundlanders were coming into contact with.⁵ Music, art and theatre are perhaps the most well-known and studied, but food certainly played its role in this form of cultural preservation. Parallel to a cultural revolution which happened in music and art, there was a conscious (and perhaps, unconscious) attempt to identify and solidify Newfoundland food culture. Images of family, nature and food mingled over time to create a romantic vision, highlighted by Burke, of “simple meals but with unequalled flavour produced by a combination of fresh air, wood smoke and a ravenous appetite brought on by old fashioned hard work.”⁶ The foundation of that culture did not come from modern convenience food or the fancy foods of entertaining, but instead came from simple, home-made foods with historical roots.

Modernism, Nationalism and the Rise of Newfoundland Pride

Reflecting broader social trends in the 1960s, many Newfoundlanders were conflicted between the quest for modernism – the “cloned plastic-wrapped homogeneity” of consumerism – and the longing for a return to traditional ways of life.⁷ While the generation which voted to join Confederation longed for improvements in their social and economic positions, their children often felt their heritage had been “sold out” for a slice of North American mass consumerism. As Jeff Webb writes: “Newfoundland seemed hell-bent on jettisoning its inheritance for

⁵ Pocius, “The Mummers Song in Newfoundland,” 58.

⁶ Burke, *Memories of Outport Life*, 81.

⁷ Chris Brookes, *A Public Nuisance: A History of the Mummers Troupe* (St. John’s, NL: ISER, 1988): 11.

the new-found delights of a new-era.”⁸ To date, writers and historians have focussed on the use of art, music and other cultural symbols as examples of cultural change and rigidity. Food was no less impacted by the resistance to modernity. In fact, food was one of the most fervent examples of the cultural expression that Newfoundlanders utilized to hold onto tradition.

The period between 1950 and 1975 certainly saw an increase in access to a variety of new foods and methods of preparation. However, the tradition of home-based food production and preservation did not vanish nor was it completely replaced by modern food technology. For instance, a 1976 food consumption survey indicated that 40.5% of the respondents continued to grow vegetables for food, while 35.9% still fished and 10.3% raised animals for food.⁹ Ethnographer John T. Omohundro discovered that people on the Northern Peninsula were continuing to plant small vegetable gardens, especially potatoes, in the late 1980s and early 1990s.¹⁰ Omohundro found that while some traditional foodways had been replaced in favour of more modern conveniences, for example, use of freezers for preservation, many people continued to hunt and pick berries as a supplement to their food supplies.¹¹ In some regions these supplements were crucial to carry families through the winter months when access to additional food supplies could be

⁸ Jeff A. Webb, “Cullers of Words: Writing the Dictionary of Newfoundland English,” in *Dictionaries: Journal of the Dictionary Society of North America* 33 (2012): 62.

⁹ James G. Barnes, *A Study of Per Capita Consumption of Certain Food Products in Newfoundland and Labrador*, ed. Michael J. Handrigan (St. John’s, NL: College of Fisheries, 1977): 5.

¹⁰ Omohundro, *Rough Food*, xvii.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 162, 205.

inaccessible due to weather conditions and poor transportation routes. Many continued to employ older traditions, like hunting, to offset these risks. Even old preservation methods, including root cellars, were used well into the twentieth century. Root cellars remain a distinctive cultural icon. The landscape near many outport communities, such as Elliston, are dotted with poignant examples of the widespread need and use of these cellars. Cut into hillsides, these dark and cool underground rooms provided a place to store root vegetables, salted meats and preserved berries. Aubrey Tizzard remembered the frequent trips his mother made from her kitchen to the outdoor cellar, sometimes even through driving snow and frigid temperatures, to prepare the family meal.¹² Refrigeration replaced the need for these cellars; however their preservation and long-term use is significant in understanding food culture and the symbolism which these processes take on. The significance of the root cellars was recognized through designation under the Provincial Historic Commemorations Program in 2012, with multiple letters of support and detailed descriptions of how root cellars are a distinctive cultural tradition and practice.¹³ By the second half of the twentieth century, supermarkets, especially in larger towns, became commonplace. However, traditional practices of selling door-to-door still existed in some areas. As Pamela Gray has noted, in the late 1970s, it was still possible to purchase fresh seal meat from returning boats at St. John's harbour, and along country roads one could purchase vegetables, berries and

¹² Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 144.

¹³ Lucy Alway, personal communication, September 28, 2018.

game from individuals.¹⁴ Even when the need no longer existed, the practices remained into the twenty-first century.

This rejection of modernism grew out of the cultural renaissance in which Newfoundlanders were encouraged to return to their roots and abandon the rapid changes affecting the island. Led by artists and musicians, this movement was in response to the generation prior who many believed “weren’t proud of the way they spoke or dressed, or how they fished.”¹⁵ Interwoven with the focus on traditional ways were the notions of nationalism and patriotism. These notions were particularly strong during the decades after Confederation as people tried to assimilate into the Canadian and North American mainstream. Many Newfoundlanders felt they were met with derision and insult by their Canadian neighbours. The creation of the “Newfie” stereotype annoyed many, while others embraced it as a new identity. As Byrne explains:

What began to emerge to replace the traditional culture of the fisherfolk was “Newfieland” peopled by “Newfies” – a place out of step with time, inhabited by the numskull figure of the “Newfie” joke, too stupid to realize his own ineptitude and alien status vis-à-vis mainstream North American society, eternally happy, embarrassingly hospitable, and full of fun, deferential to his betters...but fiercely proud of his homeland and his way of life.¹⁶

After years of trying to acclamate to the rest of Canada and North America, many Newfoundlanders felt tired and frustrated with the results. Led by the arts

¹⁴ Gray, “Traditional Newfoundland Foodways,” 44.

¹⁵ Lisa Moore, “Another Helping of Figgy Duff: Pamela Morgan Goes Home: A Roving Newfoundland Band Celebrates its Silver Anniversary,” *National Post*, 10 July 1999.

¹⁶ Byrne, “Booze, Ritual, and the Invention of Tradition,” 238.

community, a call to action went out for Newfoundlanders to accept and celebrate what made Newfoundland unique instead of trying to hide or “fit in.” As CODCO’s Mary Walsh explains:

And so we’d gone from being...the doormat of Britain to becoming Canada’s laughing stock and people would try to pretend they weren’t from Newfoundland. People would deny Newfoundland three times before the cock crowed. So, there was that whole feeling of trying to stand up again, to be what we were, and...to stop trying to be what we weren’t...¹⁷

As Gulliver has noted in her work on artists and musicians, “culture was important in creating a national identity,” which many were attempting to do in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁸ As Shane O’Dea argues, “any society emerging from marginalism creates its own social and political institutions and, sometimes subsequent to or contemporaneous with these, its own culture and national identity.”¹⁹ O’Dea’s comments relate directly to the relationship between Newfoundland and Britain in the nineteenth century; however, they are particularly relevant as well to the mid-twentieth century when Newfoundland was once again on the literal and figurative margins of Canadian Confederation and North America at large. In both time periods, “the identity asserted was a response to a growing sense of permanence, a conscious demarginalization.”²⁰

¹⁷ Gulliver, “Preserving the Best,” 44.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁹ O’Dea, “Newfoundland: The Development of Culture on the Margin,” 80.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Nostalgia/Romanticism of Past Ways

Nostalgia and a sense of loss are key to understanding the development of Newfoundland food culture. The undercurrent of the post-Confederation period was, according to Bannister, that Newfoundland's "golden age lay not in a modern future of material wealth but in an idyllic past of outport culture."²¹ Nostalgia, particularly for Newfoundlanders, can be understood as a "feeling of loss, longing for a home that no longer exists or has been created as a romantic notion within one's own imagination."²² James Overton, for example, argues that much of contemporary culture in Newfoundland was influenced by a "nostalgic and sentimental view of Newfoundland."²³ Nostalgia permits people to try to "replace longing with belonging and a sense of loss with a rediscovery of identity."²⁴ Food memories are created out of remembered smells, tastes and textures, but also within contexts of childhood, family, and community. For example, many can remember waking up to homemade bread being baked in the kitchen, the aromas swirling with the voices of grandmothers and mothers and the feeling of being safe at home. Since food is the constant in daily life it can be the common ground for families, binding them together with tastes and experiences, like mealtimes.²⁵

²¹ Bannister, "Making History," 180.

²² Gulliver, "Preserving the Best," 23.

²³ James Overton, "Coming Home: Nostalgia and Tourism in Newfoundland," *Acadiensis* 14, 1 (1984): 97.

²⁴ Gulliver, "Preserving the Best," 23.

²⁵ Tye, *Baking As Biography*, 27.

Nostalgia mixed with consumer practices to further enhance food memories.

The local community shop, like the home kitchen, was a social place in which shopkeeper and customer shared more than a commercial transaction. As Burke remembers:

Often there would be some older men of the community sitting around on the counter yarning about the old days when times had been busier, about the weather or the latest news on the local and international scene. The Shop had that warmth about that so many of us remember about these outport stores - a warmth of comradeship and a feeling that it was a sort of social forum for the events of the day as well as a place of business.²⁶

This experience was replicated in many communities around the island. Aubrey Tizzard's father's store in Notre Dame Bay was similar in the role it played for the townspeople.²⁷ While these scenes could be replicated in many parts of the world, they are significant in the collective memory of Newfoundlanders. These memories of time and place have been incorporated into distinct cultural meaning in Newfoundland.

Nostalgia is particularly influential when considered in the context of resettlement programs within the island as well as the exodus of people to mainland Canada seeking employment. The resettlement programs of the Smallwood government were often greeted with mixed opinions and emotions. Some people moved willingly; looking for new prospects for employment, education and access to modern conveniences and services. Those that moved reluctantly mourned the loss

²⁶ Burke, *Memories of Outport Life*, 18.

²⁷ Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground*, 120-121.

of community and family ties that went deeper than the structures of houses and churches. Burke writes poetically of the concrete reminders of communities turned into ghost towns:

...mute reminders of an era that has come to an end, and that these once thriving settlements are now but a memory - some of them not even mentioned on provincial road maps - places where there is no sound but that made by "the wings of seagulls that beat eternally and haunt old harbours with their silver cry."²⁸

Resettlement became a focus of the generation of "Newfoundland renaissance" people - mainly middle-class artists, musicians and scholars - who sought to recapture what they considered a lost piece of Newfoundland culture. While the argument for authenticity and even hypocrisy of the individuals who loudly protested the loss of Newfoundland culture can be made, they did represent real sentiments. In the essay, "The Exile of Uncle Joe," Burke traces Uncle Joe's last days in Sandy Harbour as he moves to St. John's as another "victim of centralization."²⁹ Burke's poetic description of Uncle Joe's days are heart wrenchingly accurate of the many similar stories of the time:

He looked in vain for a familiar face but there was none...So he just sat there on a bench and watched the seagulls and the big ships entering and leaving the harbour. Unnoticed he sits there - this old man of the sea. In his eyes are mirrored the rich colorful outport traditions of the past. His mind is a storehouse of memories of the fisherfolk who once lived by the sea and his heart is a repository of the hopes and dreams of yesteryear. And his thoughts go back to a friendly little harbour, to a yellow house with the big oak tree outside the kitchen window and to a peaceful cemetery where lies his beloved Elizabeth within sound of the soaring seagulls and the gentle murmuring sea.³⁰

²⁸ Burke, *Memories of Outport Life*, 23.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

Many Newfoundlanders also left home for the mainland, often to seek better economic opportunities. For these individuals, what was left behind often remains a part of memory, an image captured in time of family, friends and the communities that were lost through space and time. The dream was always to return “home” and recapture the remembered way of life. Whether it was resettlement or an economic draw to emigrate, many Newfoundlanders found themselves living away from home in the decades after Confederation. Similar to cultural diaspora felt by other peoples who immigrant, those Newfoundlanders sought ways to continue their heritage and recreate familiarity in different settings. They achieved this through Newfoundland social clubs on the mainland, dances that featured accordion music and through food traditions like Jiggs Dinner on Sundays and pea soup on Saturdays.

Role of Invented Tradition – Beyond Taste

The maintenance of food traditions is one way of identifying self and place of origin. As Diane Tye has argued, food culture can allow us to better understand how groups self-define, “how they interact with and are modified by other subcultures,” and how they shape ethnicity.³¹ Furthermore, traditions can be evaluated in the extent to which taste is ‘sticky’, in which people eat the same foods repeatedly, or in which taste is ‘plastic’, in which people incorporate new foods into their diets and cultures.³²

³¹ Tye, *Baking as Biography*, 21.

³² Fitzgerald and Petrick, “In Good Taste,” 395.

Preparing and eating particular food maintains a connection with a 'homeland' and a heritage that can be comforting and nurturing. It also establishes a clear distinction between self and 'Other.' The concept of culinary 'Other' has been demonstrated by post-colonial writers as both a culturally protective force as well as a conquering force.³³ For example, curries were introduced to Victorian housewives as a food which could be incorporated into their homes without fear, that they could domesticate this "foreign" food into something suitable for the white, British, consumer.³⁴ One way to identify self from other is through particular dishes, specifically those with an historical basis. For instance, Tye points to the Scottish tradition of oatcakes as replicated and continued in Pictou County, Nova Scotia.³⁵ In Newfoundland, the tradition of fish and brewis was adopted from the migratory fisherman and little changed in its composition over centuries, except perhaps the cooking vessels and heat source. The basic recipe, similar to the following from a 1977 *Decks Awash* article, still relies on the ship-staple of hard bread:

1 lb - 1 ½ lb Hard Bread
1 lb Dried Salt Codfish
(more or less)
¼ lb Salt Pork
(or a little less)

Break hard bread and soak in cold water about 6-8 hours, preferably overnight. Wash and clean fish, cut in pieces and soak overnight in cold water. When ready to cook change water on fish and boil for 20 minutes or until fish falls away from bones. Boil hard bread in water it was soaked in; bring just to a boil and remove. Strain immediately. Mix

³³ For example: Susan Zlotnick, "Domesticating Imperialism: Curry and Cookbooks in Victorian England," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 16, no. 2/3 (1996): 51-68.

³⁴ Zlotnick, "Domesticating Imperialism," 53.

³⁵ Tye, *Baking as Biography*, 59.

fish with hard bread. Serve with scrunchions which is the salt pork cut fine and fried until brown. If desired scrunchions may be mixed with fish and hard bread before serving.³⁶

Many considered fish and brewis, or its related dish of salt fish and potatoes (with or without brewis) as the “most regularly served of all fish dishes.”³⁷ With her recipe contribution to *Fat-back & Molasses*, Mrs. Florence Wilkinson-Moores of Topsail notes that it is a “typical Newfoundland dish which everyone learns to love, even the English Methodist Parsons.”³⁸ The association with Newfoundland and fish and brewis is echoed in the Fort Pepperrell Cookbook, compiled by the wives of American soldiers based at Fort Pepperrell, near St. John’s. The only recipe attributed to the local area and the one without roots in the United States is the final entry in the cookbook - fish and brewis. The compilers of the cookbook signed the recipe as *Terra Nova* and cite the location with the geographic coordinates for St. John’s in an effort to identify this dish as truly Newfoundland.³⁹

Fitzgerald and Petrick have argued for the importance of considering the relationship between cuisine, national identity and taste.⁴⁰ Taste, while important, does not always supersede the cultural symbolism of a particular food. For instance, while in the vast majority of North America the taste for salted barrel pork was eroded as access to fresh beef increased in the nineteenth century, salted pork and

³⁶ “Newfoundland Specialties,” *Decks Awash* 6, no. 5 (August 1977): 8.

³⁷ Margaret, *fish & brewis, toutens & tales*, 55.

³⁸ Jespersen, *Fat-Back & Molasses*, 7.

³⁹ Fort Pepperrell Wives Club, *New found recipes* (St. John’s, NL: Fort Pepperrell Wives Club, 1947): n.p.

⁴⁰ Fitzgerald and Petrick, “In Good Taste,” 395.

beef remained a prominent fixture in Newfoundland food culture.⁴¹ For example, Great Hussey writes of the various meals which utilized the salted pork and beef during her fishing trips to Labrador:

Once a week, we served fish and brewis...It was served with pork fat and scrunchions. Beans were served three times a week: boiled first and then fried in the fry pan, baked with salt pork and molasses, or boiled with salt meat. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays were called "duff days"...That is what made up the meal: salt meat, pease pudding, the two flour duffs, and seabirds...⁴²

Well into the 1970s, salted meats continued to be popular in Newfoundland, especially in the iconic Jiggs Dinner. The meal is reminiscent of a British "cooked dinner" with all the ingredients being cooked in one large pot. Typical ingredients included turnip, potatoes, carrots, cabbage, parsnips and salt beef. While the meal varies little, there are some local variants of the tradition. These variants are what makes the meal distinct in Newfoundland as opposed to the many similar meals prepared throughout the world. For example, the inclusion of pease pudding and salt meat are uniquely Newfoundland additions. As Len Margaret notes, the meal was referred to as "Thursday Dinner" in St. Leonard's, and if it was served on Sundays or special occasions, peas pudding or figgy duff would be added to give it a "festive touch."⁴³

Seal meat is another example of a dish which continued in popularity, despite political controversy over its hunt and disagreement over its taste. Anspach noted

⁴¹ Fitzgerald and Petrick, "In Good Taste," 395.

⁴² Hussey, *Our Life on Lear's Room*, 50-51.

⁴³ Margaret, *fish & brewis, toutens & tales*, 75

the objectionable taste of seal meat in 1819 and acknowledged the attempts of settlers to improve on its taste through the use of port wine and herbs.⁴⁴ The use of seal meat in cooking was still evident over one-hundred and fifty years later. In 1962, for example, Bren Walsh wrote in *The Globe Magazine* about seal flippers: “To the outsider the merchandise seems noisome, and the atmosphere resembles that of a tannery, but it would take more than an offensive smell to stop a true Newfoundlander from eating flippers, stewed or baked in a pie.”⁴⁵ The seal hunt itself was dangerous and many men perished on the ice floes. Yet, the tradition continued, and a part of the hunt was the meal waiting when they returned:

Like many other occupations sealing carries with it both the perils of disaster and the promise of glory. Every boy who goes out on the hunt returns a man. But all the promises of sealing are not for the sport, for the Newfoundland sealer responds just as heartily to the rich aroma of baked flipper as he does to the large crowds greeting his ship returning to port.⁴⁶

Likely one of those baked flipper dishes resembled the following recipe, which combines two of Newfoundland’s preferred products – seal and salt pork.

2 flippers	1 turnip	6 potatoes
Salt & pepper	3 slices salt pork	2 carrots
2 onions	1 parsnip	

Soak flippers for ½ hour in cold water to which has been added 1 tbsp. baking soda. Remove fat from flippers, wash and cut in serving pieces.

Fry out the pork and remove the scrunchions. Brown flippers in this fat. Then add water and sear until partly tender. Add onion and vegetables, except the potatoes. Season and add more water. Cook about ½ hour, then add potatoes. Cook another 15 minutes. Cover

⁴⁴ Anspach, *History of the Island of Newfoundland*, 418.

⁴⁵ Bren Walsh, “A strange delicacy from the deep,” *The Globe Magazine*, May 12, 1962: 14.

⁴⁶ Jespersen, ed., *Fat-back & Molasses*, 33.

with your favourite pastry and bake at 425 F. for 20 minutes.
(Contributed by United Church Women, Swift Current)⁴⁷

Once again, despite the availability of alternative protein sources, and arguably, more palatable options, Newfoundlanders continued to enjoy the traditional dishes of the past.

In February of 1960, Newfoundland's *Journal of Commerce*, declared that certain Newfoundland dishes were disappearing.⁴⁸ These included historical staples like trout, salmon and capelin; fish and brewis, toutins and doughboys; and moose, rabbit and caribou.⁴⁹ Contrary to the dismal picture created by the *Journal*, there is evidence to suggest that these 'national' dishes were alive and well and even experiencing a renewal in interest and popularity. In 1979, for example, the popular magazine *Chimo!* carried a feature on Newfoundland dishes. The author wrote that "the old fashioned dishes based on foods that sailing vessels could carry without spoilage are still popular, and many are surprisingly good."⁵⁰

One cannot ignore the economic factor involved in food choice. In 1977, Newfoundlanders continued to pay a greater percentage of their net income for food as a result of the large quantities of imported foods.⁵¹ Many traditional foods relied on less expensive ingredients – like potatoes, turnips and salted meats and fish. This is one reason traditions held on so long in Newfoundland. However, it is clearly not

⁴⁷ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁸ "Disappearing Dishes," *Newfoundland Journal of Commerce*, February 1960: 9.

⁴⁹ Ibid. Spelling maintained from original.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Norton Leonard, "Fresh from the Atlantic," *Chimo!*, 2, no. 8 (December 1979): 41.

⁵¹ Gray, "Traditional Newfoundland Foodways," 23.

the sole reason. As many canned or frozen foods become more financially feasible, Newfoundlanders did not turn away from their traditional foodways.

Beyond Subsistence – food and symbolism

In 1962, Olga H. Anderson wrote about the traditional boiled dinner in Newfoundland. She noted that:

It appears that Newfoundlanders, as well as people in other parts of the world, do not change their long established food habits as quickly as other modes of living. The national dish of Newfoundland is a nourishing one-pot meal known as a boiled dinner comprised of salt beef or pork with potatoes, turnips, carrots and cabbage...Today, when fresh meat may be purchased in most stores, the boiled dinner is still the preferred meal.⁵²

To account for this preference for food, that at first glance lacks sophistication and flavour, there must be an understanding of the importance of symbolism of food. The boiled dinner, along with other traditional Newfoundland meals, moved from a place of subsistence and bodily survival to one of spiritual and historical nostalgia. The attraction of “rough food” in the modern age reflects the longing for a unique past. The rough food mystique was born out of a “conscious demarginalization.” Many turned to food as an expression of being a Newfoundlander and welcomed a return to ancestral ways of cooking, preserving and sourcing foods. There appeared to be a visceral connection between the people and the land through food, an awareness and appreciation for old ways and traditions. For instance, the

⁵² Olga H. Anderson, “Boiled Dinner Still Preferred,” *Canadian Hospital*, February 1962: 61.

preface to the 1989 edition of the cookbook *Fat-back & Molasses* ascribes its success as being,

enhanced by the beautiful culture it reflects. It mirrors an image of a people whose pristine character has been carved from four centuries of living on the “Rock.” The delightful names of their recipes and the colour of their humour reveal a people whose imagination is still very much alive and in communion with nature and the joy of life.⁵³

Furthermore, it was strongly felt that the only way culture could be appreciated was to reawaken feelings and appreciation for what was good in “our history, our song and our dance, and in all other aspects of our folklore.”⁵⁴

⁵³ “Preface to Fourth Edition of *Fat-Back & Molasses*,” in *Fat-Back & Molasses: A Collection of Favourite Old Recipes from Newfoundland & Labrador*, ed. Ivan F. Jespersion (St. John’s, NL: Jespersen Publishing, 2014, reprint).

⁵⁴ Gulliver, “Preserving the Best, 93.

Conclusion – “Salt Beef Junkie”

Tracing the history of a food culture involves entering the homes and lives of those that practice and value that culture. The purpose of this study was to uncover the roots of Newfoundland’s food culture and identify both the foods associated with it and the symbolic meaning these foods have taken on. From the beginning settlers to Newfoundland embraced themes of preservation, adoption and adaptation in relation to food. Early settlers brought ideas and cultural traditions from across the Atlantic ocean – notably the primacy of bread – and maintained this tradition in their new country. Settlers, sometimes relying on Indigenous knowledge and experience, incorporated new vegetation, including berries, into their diet to improve nutrition and taste. Finally, settlers adapted to the challenges Newfoundland presented to them and modified their reliance on domesticated animals for protein to include native game meat, seabirds and fish. These early settlers to Newfoundland created the foundation for generations of food traditions and the development of a uniquely Newfoundland diet and the cultural symbolism of that food.

Looking back, it is difficult to image a world in which food knowledge is passed on primarily through oral tradition. Current society is dominated by a foodie generation – one raised on celebrity chefs and around the clock food television. Knowledge comes from global sources and is influenced as much by social media as one’s own preference. We are jaded into thinking there has always been an unlimited wealth of information, products and ideas. Newfoundland food culture has

not been immune to this global phenomenon. A Google search for fish and brewis, figgy duff or partridgeberry jam turns up hundreds of recipes, images and reviews. New immigrants from around the world, including India, parts of Africa and Asia, bring new flavours and foods to a relatively homogenous palate. Yet, Newfoundland traditions hold strong.

In many ways, Newfoundlanders have been in a tenuous position for over a century between the lure of modernity and the hold of tradition. The benefits of road construction, communication development and economic growth are apparent. These changes increased access to North American foods, especially convenience foods, and the marketing giants who support their production and sale. As people moved out of the family fishery into more industrialized labour, like fish plants and manufacturing, or into high-skilled trades, the need for quick meals increased. Communities that once relied on local food supplies are able to access a greater variety, even in uncertain winter months. Supermarkets and branded grocery stores replaced the town merchant store or coastal supply boat. Despite this increasing use of modern conveniences, traditional dishes continued to feature in many peoples' diets. While fewer people caught their own fish, they still sought out fresh and salted cod to make fish and brewis.

Oral tradition is significant for many of Newfoundland's cultural symbols. Music and stories are often shared across generations. Food knowledge was also passed along in a similar fashion. Food was also memorialized in cookbooks and instruction manuals for the home cook to recreate traditional dishes and newly

inspired meals. Cookbooks were a useful tool in sharing recipes and documenting a community's identity. What emerged in the mid-twentieth century was a distinction between what people ate at home and what was made for entertaining. Cookbooks, in their focus on precision and aesthetics, helped individuals prepare food for guests and for display. These were not the boiled dinners and "bread and tea" type meals, but ones that were meant to impress.

Newfoundland food culture, summarized by the "rough food mystique," was sustained through two key factors. The first is the role of women. As the main cooks of the family, wives and mothers led their households from the kitchen and ensured their families were fed. They maintained culturally significant foods – like bread – and exerted control over what people ate. The roles women play has changed significantly over time. Once relegated to home, focussed on children and household duties, or helping with the family fishery, women were often marginalized by a patriarchal society. As feminist movements gained ground, along with economic changes, women moved into the full-time workforce. For many, this was freeing and exciting. For others, the demands of work and home were a struggle. Women remained the gatekeepers of their family's nutrition and the food traditions of their communities. I learned from my mother, as she learned from hers, and my grandmother from hers, endlessly tracing the food knowledge back through generations.

Secondly, Newfoundland food traditions were protected by nostalgia during a time of dramatic social and political change. By the 1960s and 1970s, many

Newfoundlanders were longing for a return to a previous lifestyle, one which reflected an idealized outport culture of Newfoundland and rejected the modern consumer era. During the 1966 Centennial Celebrations, commentators noted that Newfoundlanders, while officially Canadians for nearly two decades, still considered themselves Newfoundlanders first and foremost.⁵⁵ Food, similar to other cultural elements, became attached with symbolism and nativist sentiments as interactions with North America increased. As Newfoundland grew closer to North American food trends, the foods associated with the past gained traction and increased in popularity. As Pocius argues, “nativists turned to any kind of survivalist folklore to provide a link for the current generation to some ancestral group deemed the creator of authentic culture.”⁵⁶ This applies to food as much as to music or art. Restaurants began to serve local ingredients like salted fish, moose and partridgeberries as a form of “nouvelle cuisine” to highlight the delicacies and unique foods of the island.

The challenge for many was to figure out how to incorporate the aspects of the ‘new’ culture of North America alongside the ‘old’ cultural traditions of Newfoundland. While the old ways were easy to idealize, in reality they were often hard, perilous and unstable. O’Flaherty is apt in summing up the benefits and losses twenty-five years after Confederation:

⁵⁵ Mekaela Gulliver, “Preserving the Best: Newfoundland’s Cultural Movement, 1965-1983” (PhD diss., Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2014): 51.

⁵⁶ Gerald L. Pocius, “The Mummers Song in Newfoundland: Intellectuals, Revivalists and Cultural Nativism,” *Newfoundland Studies* 4, no. 1 (1988): 76.

It seems likely as well that people have run the risk of losing communal and family values, age-old certainties, and of replacing them with the enervating Canadian habits of introspection and self-doubt. We now cannot prevent some of the more vulgar aspects of North American life from intruding into our communities...[but] the mass of people now enjoy a freedom which the old outport never allowed them...they chose a way out of labour, dependence, and peril, and they chose wisely...their destiny is at last within their control.⁵⁷

Taking control was key – making decisions that best suited individuals and Newfoundland culture at large became an important part of nationalism.

The foods which developed out of necessity – fish and brewis, doughboys, moose stew, and many more – did not vanish from the lives of Newfoundlanders. Instead, a choice was made to give them a place of honour. Many of these dishes are now the centerpieces of family gatherings, celebrations and social visits. Ironically, the entertaining dishes found in cookbooks have become so common that they no longer evoke a sense of celebration. Instead, when people gather together, whether in Newfoundland or away, they seek the foods of the past to nourish them, both physically and spiritually. Newfoundlanders, it seems, will go to absurd lengths for a piece of the homeland. For years, my parents drove from Ontario to Newfoundland with a deep freezer in the back of the truck. It would be loaded with moose, fish and berries for the drive back and often surrounded by cases of bottled mussels, rabbit and a bag or two of turnips. And for the 20 years I lived away, there was always a turr on the table at Christmas. But, it was never about the

⁵⁷ Patrick O’Flaherty, “Looking backwards: the milieu of the old Newfoundland outports,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 10, no. 1 (1975): 9.

food itself. It was always about the connection to home; a thread connecting generations with generations and memories of smells and tastes of kitchens that now stood empty. Food nourishes the body, but it can transform the mind and soul to enter another time, another place. For Newfoundlanders, food is one of the ties that bind people together, like the ocean waves beating against the rocky shore.

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