

## ***Episode Outline***

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## Introduction

Hello and welcome to today's episode, discussing the complex history of what we mean when we say Canadian Food. As a country, Canada has a wide spectrum of cultural foods - from the history of Immigrant families opening restaurants, to fusion cuisine and Indigenous restaurants and catering business thriving in the face of historic cultural bans. As someone studying historical cookbooks, my interests lie more closely with Settler-Indigenous foodways practices predating all of the above. Well before contact, Indigenous nations were cultivating resources from the land, engaging in trade, agriculture and seasonal diets. After colonization, these practices were heavily policed by the Government and foodways began to change, in different ways, across Canada. As publishing became more available in the nineteenth century, Canadians were able to purchase both reprinted European and American cookbooks, as well as Canadian publications. In looking through some of these cookbooks we can see how Settlers interpreted Indigenous foodways, and use them as a springboard to look at the long lasting effects of colonial changes on the landscape.

### A Short History of Canadian Cookbooks

The 1831 Kingston edition of *The Cook Not Mad* is often credited as Canada's first published cookbook. This is only true, if you specify that it is the first English language cookbook. The first cookbook ever published in Canada was the 1825 *La cuisiniere bourgeoise* by Menon, published in Quebec City and a reprint of a French cookbook by the same name.<sup>1</sup> Both of these earliest cookbooks were reprints of editions authored in The United States and France respectively, and represents the typical demographic of cookbooks in Canada. Before widespread publishing, settlers brought with them cookbooks, manuscripts and notes with their recipes, and imported cookbooks from overseas and the US were available in bookshops.<sup>2</sup> Even before full books, recipes were printed in newspapers, pamphlets and broadsheets - a recipe for Spruce Beer dates as far back as a 1783 broadsheet for example.<sup>3</sup> Indigenous cooking wasn't explicitly referenced or written down in these early editions, though *The Cook Not Mad* features around six recipes that draw directly from Indigenous foodways or have the term Indian in the title, referring specifically to what they called Indian Corn, but is better known as Flint Corn now.

It wasn't until *The Female Emigrant's Guide*, published in 1854, that Indigenous foodways were explicitly credited with forwards to the recipes and information on cultural practices and harvesting, all from the English-Settler perspective of Catherine Parr Traill, the author. She includes sections on Wild Fruits, Cranberries, Wild Rice, Indian Corn, Pumpkins, Squash, Foraged Substitutes for Tea and Coffee, Maple Sugar, and varieties of Canadian Game Meats and Fish. Within these sections she has recipes from cranberry sauce and jelly, two types of Indian Meal bread, a tea cake recipe sweetened with maple sugar, three recipes for wild rice, a

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Driver, *Culinary Landmarks: A Bibliography of Canadian Cookbooks, 1825-1949* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), xxiii

<sup>2</sup> Driver, *Culinary Landmarks*, xxi

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xxi

method for making hominy, as well as recipes that feature Indian Meal such as pancakes, four types of pudding, pound cake, tea-cake, breakfast cakes and yorkshire pudding, as well as notes on Mountain Sweet, Labrador and Hemlock Tea, and six Maple based recipes.<sup>4</sup> These recipes lean more towards settler adaptations rather than recipes taken from Indigenous communities, though there is a demonstrable reliance on cash crops such as Wild Rice, as well as traditional knowledge on forageables. Her other writings reveal the extent to which she interacted with and learned from the Miichi Saagiig in the Nogojiwanong/Peterborough area where she lived.

Aside from the official record of published cookbooks, personal manuscripts such as the 1790s *Recipes and Remedies of Upper Canada* by Hannah Jarvis also reveals how commonplace these ingredients would have been, and even noted in private ladies notebooks.<sup>5</sup> Though fewer, she has three recipes that relate to these foodways. Many of the early cookbooks with a North American provenance have these Indigenous links. It is a common generalization that Settler women came to North America without any knowledge of the land, or edible flora and fauna. While this is mostly true, it doesn't account for the fact that Europeans would have been exposed to many of these Indigenous foodways from centuries earlier in the Columbian Exchange. Indigenous foods such as corn, potatoes, cassava, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, peanuts, pumpkins, squashes, pineapples, chili peppers, tobacco and more were all products that were taken to Europe in the 15th century.<sup>6</sup> In this process, traditional knowledge and stories associated with these products were dissociated from these foods, even in later periods we see settler writings devalue the stories associated with these foods, and largely ignorant to the teachings associated with them.

### **Food Based Teachings**

Catherine Parr Traill would have been exposed to Anishinaabe worldviews and teachings in her interactions with the Michii Sagiig. One of the foundational teachings is the 13 Grandmother teachings and the moon phases. Of the thirteen moon phases, there are five that directly relate to edible items from the natural world. I find this interesting as the teachings and their relation to food demonstrate that food products are more than just things to sustain the body, but have greater meaning when connected to land and community. First there is Ziisbaakdoke Giizis, The Sugar Moon, in March. Educational resources from the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation share that this is the time of year “when new life begins to show itself and provide medicines from all Creation for purification.”<sup>7</sup> Maple sap is starting to flow and community gathers to prepare the sap into syrup and sugar, a strong medicine the Creator gave to

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<sup>4</sup> Catherine Parr Traill, *The Female Emigrant's Guide: Cooking with a Canadian Classic*. Edited by Nathalie Cooke and Fiona Lucas (McGill-Queen's Press, 2017)

<sup>5</sup> Hannah Jarvis, *Recipes and Remedies in Upper Canada*, Edited, compiled and published by Dr. Elizabeth Oliver-Malone, (Kentville: Gaspereau Press, 2015)

<sup>6</sup> J.R McNeil, “Columbian Exchange.” Encyclopedia Britannica.  
<<https://www.britannica.com/event/Columbian-exchange>>

<sup>7</sup> Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, “Ziisbaakdoke-Giizis - Sugar Moon” Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, March 2017 <<https://www.cottfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/DOC030117.pdf>>

balance blood.<sup>8</sup> The next is Namebine Giizis, The Sucker Moon, in April. It is during this time that the “sucker fish returns to spawn after traveling to the spirit realm to receive cleansing techniques for this world,” and as it is easier to net these fish in this time, “it is believed the sucker is giving up his life to help sustain the Anishinaabe.”<sup>9</sup> In June, we have Ode’min Giizis, the Strawberry Moon. This marks the beginning of summer, and “represents the sweetness and kindest of emotions that bring people together to love one another, and feast in the spirit of forgiveness and peace.”<sup>10</sup> The strawberry is revered as a medicine, and is named Ode’min as the root word, Ode, is Anishinaabemowin for Heart. In July, we have Mskomini Giizis, the Raspberry Moon. The teaching associated with this moon is that when change happens in “learning gentleness and kindness, we may pass through the thorns of its brush and harvest the gift of its fruit.”<sup>11</sup> I came across a few differences between Nations for August and September, between Blackberry, Wild Rice, and Corn Moon. For the Chippewa of the Thames First Nation, August is Datkaagmin Giizis, the Blackberry Moon. The First People’s Indigenous Centre at Durham College identifies August as Manoominii Giizis, the Ricing Moon.<sup>12</sup> The differences are subtle, but overall, August seems to largely be considered a time for early harvest. For the Blackberry Moon, this time represents its three-year fruit bearing cycle, whose purpose “is to protect the Sacred Circle of life by allowing us to recognize and understand the teachings that come from the Spirit World.”<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, the teaching for the Ricing Moon is balance, harmony and future forward thinking. It also represents the traditional time to harvest wild rice and hold ceremony.<sup>14</sup> The final moon that relates to foodways in the Anishinaabe worldview is the Mdaamini Giizis, the Corn Moon. This moon teaches about the cycle of life and when the cycle is near completion. Corn represents a whole life “revealed in the thirteen rows of multi-coloured seeds. These colours remind the Anishinaabe of all the spirits waiting to be honoured in a sacred feasting ceremony.”<sup>15</sup> What these combined teachings reveal are a reciprocal relationship with the land, food and spiritual wellbeing. With this in mind, we can see how disconnected Settlers likely would have been from the larger implications around these foodways that they used liberally in their own diets. Furthermore, it deepens the impact of colonial policies that affected these foods as it wasn’t only regulating traditional harvesting,

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<sup>8</sup> Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, “Zisbaakdoke-Giizis - Sugar Moon”

<sup>9</sup> Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, “Namebine Giizis: Sucker Moon” Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, April 2021 <[https://www.cottfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/April\\_Mazinigan\\_web.pdf](https://www.cottfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/April_Mazinigan_web.pdf)>

<sup>10</sup> Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, “Ode’min Giizis: Strawberry Moon” Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, June 2021 <[https://www.cottfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/June\\_Mazinigan\\_Print.pdf](https://www.cottfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/June_Mazinigan_Print.pdf)>

<sup>11</sup> Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, “Mskomini Giizis: Raspberry Moon” Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, July 2021 <[https://www.cottfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/July\\_Mazinigan\\_Print.pdf](https://www.cottfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/July_Mazinigan_Print.pdf)>

<sup>12</sup> First Peoples Indigenous Centre, “The Thirteen Moons Teaching Cycle,” Durham College, <<https://durhamcollege.ca/info-for/indigenous-students/information-and-resources/13-moons>>

<sup>13</sup> Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, “Datkaagmin Giizis: Blackberry Moon” Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, August 2022 <[https://www.cottfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/August\\_Mazinigan.pdf](https://www.cottfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/August_Mazinigan.pdf)>

<sup>14</sup> First Peoples Indigenous Centre, “The Thirteen Moons Teaching Cycle,” Durham College, <<https://durhamcollege.ca/info-for/indigenous-students/information-and-resources/13-moons>>

<sup>15</sup> “Colonization Road,” Colonization Road, <<https://www.colonizationroad.com/>> Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, “Mdaamini-Giizis: Corn Moon” Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, September 2022 <[https://www.cottfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Sept\\_Mazinigan.pdf](https://www.cottfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Sept_Mazinigan.pdf)>

hunting and fishing, but policed the place these foods had in Anishinaabe culture, oppressed the freedom to practice food based traditions and divorced the spirit from these items.

### Colonial Impacts

Policies and infrastructure associated with colonialism played a major impact on the shifting traditional foodways landscape. One of the earliest physical alterations were the creation of Colonization Roads. The Public Land Act of 1853 essentially laid the foundation for Ontario's contemporary roads. The process of creating these roads forcefully dispossessed Indigenous peoples already living on the lands the Government wanted to clear and were designed to link settler communities to each other to improve trade, transportation and interconnectedness in the supposed wilderness.<sup>16</sup> With the creation of the new roads and public land system, it was hoped that it would encourage new Settlers to come to Ontario. As the land was being given away at no cost to the Settler, Indigenous communities petitioned the state for a parcel of their own land and were rejected in favour of European settlement schemes.<sup>17</sup> As a result, reserves were constructed in remote regions that isolated communities even further, and disrupted traditional foraging, hunting and fishing grounds.<sup>18</sup> The legacy of the colonization roads are unmistakable, as Ontarians continue to drive on them everyday. Anishinaabe activist and comedian Ryan McMahon alongside filmmaker Michelle St. John created a documentary on this exact topic, inspired by having grown up in Fort Frances where the main road is still called Colonization Road.<sup>19</sup>

Colonization Roads also extended to other provincial infrastructure, such as the construction of canals and widening of waterways. The expansion and controlled flooding of the Trent Severn waterway for example, flooded traditional wild rice beds, drowning out this traditional crop and preventing future planting as the waters became too deep. This issue was recently immortalized in the CBC documentary *Cottagers and Indians*, directed by Drew Hayden Taylor. Taylor is an Anishinaabe author and humorist who was born and raised in Curve Lake First Nation, the site of the conflict at hand. Indigenous people from Curve Lake First Nation have taken it upon themselves to re-seed the lake with wild rice, for Indigenous and Food Sovereignty, reclaiming historic water and foodways and promoting biodiversity. On the other hand, Cottagers are concerned about illegal farming, impacts of monoculture and access to the waterways.<sup>20</sup> It's a complex issue that I won't get into further, but if you're interested in learning more the documentary is available to watch for free.

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Foster, "Displacements and Disposessions resulting from The Public Lands Act of 1853," UBC Blogs, February 16 2021, <<https://blogs.ubc.ca/buildingempire/2021/02/16/ontarios-colonial-roads-networks-1853-1910/>>

<sup>17</sup> Foster, "Displacements and Disposessions resulting from The Public Lands Act of 1853"

<sup>18</sup> Lang Pioneer Village Museum, "Aabamnigaan: Looking Ahead," YouTube Video, 17:01, January 19 2021, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5HG17CnxfQ>>

<sup>19</sup> "Colonization Road," Colonization Road, <<https://www.colonizationroad.com/>>

<sup>20</sup> *Cottagers and Indians*, directed by Drew Hayden Taylor (2020; CBC, 2020), <<https://gem.cbc.ca/cbc-docs-pov/s04e01?autoplay=1>>

Even outside of the Nogojiwanong/Peterborough Area that has been the focus so far due to its connection with the *Female Emigrant's Guide*, policies and practices that promoted the destruction of foodways and starvation of Indigenous peoples has happened across Canada. The Bison in the Plains is another example of this, that by the time 1888 rolled around there were no wild Bison left in Canada.<sup>21</sup> The Hudson's Bay Company was the largest consumer of Bison meat, specifically the byproduct of Pemman, which is made with dried Bison meat, fat and berries.<sup>22</sup> Indigenous communities and HBC employees were competing for access to game in the prairies, which only put more strain on the ecosystem as more settlers came westward. Starvation affected Indigenous nations, and discussions of a possible famine crisis were raised during the Treaty Six negotiations in 1876, but ultimately no policies were put in place to protect Bison populations.<sup>23</sup> In the following year, a protection ordinance was created, but it policed the access Indigenous and Metis hunters had to the Bison, who not only needed this foodsource to sustain their communities but relied on them as a livelihood.<sup>24</sup>

Bannock is another food that relates to starvation but straddles the line of its place in Indigenous cuisine. Legend has it that this quick bread was originally brought over by Scottish settlers and was widely adopted by Indigenous people across Canada, especially during times of starvation.<sup>25</sup> KC Adams, an Oji-Cree Artist created an art piece that speaks to the contested place of Bannock in her piece *The Gift that Keeps on Giving*. Unfired clay pots are filled with 'the five gifts of the white man,' - flour, lard, sugar, milk and salt. The pots, representing the body, are then filled with these raw ingredients and are "susceptible to the influences of the ingredients" and how the five gifts alter the body.<sup>26</sup> Especially in the prairies, lands that had been farmed and maintained by Indigenous communities were frequently carved up and given to settlers, while Indigenous communities were forced into reserves that weren't as fertile as their already established farms, coupled with the disruption of fishing and hunting grounds, reliance on bannock was increasingly becoming more popular as these five ingredients became staples as part of Government-issued rations.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, Indigenous chefs still use bannock as a key food in their businesses, cafes and restaurants. Alethea Guiboche runs a non-profit organization that delivers bannock, stew and other meals to the unhoused in Winnipeg, the majority of which also being Indigenous. The meals represent comfort food, "even if the food does come from a legacy of colonization."<sup>28</sup> Even entrepreneurs are creating companies that sell

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<sup>21</sup> Wildlife Conservation Society Canada, "Bison: The Challenge," Wildlife Conservation Society Canada <[<sup>22</sup> Bill Waiser, "Whither the Bison: What happened to the Prairies' once-mighty herds?" CBC, September 5th, 2021. <\[>\]\(https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/waiser-history-whither-the-bison-1.6154180\)](https://www.wcscanada.org/Wildlife/Bison.aspx#:~:text=Large%20herds%20migrated%20and%20grazed,Park%20in%20the%20United%20States.></a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

<sup>23</sup> Waiser, "Whither the Bison"

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>25</sup> Zoe Heaps Tennant, "Does Bannock Have a Place in Indigenous Cuisine?" *The Walrus*, June 10th 2020, <[<sup>26</sup> Zoe Heaps Tennant, "Does Bannock Have a Place in Indigenous Cuisine?"](https://thewalrus.ca/breaking-bread/></a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

<sup>27</sup> Zoe Heaps Tennant, "Does Bannock Have a Place in Indigenous Cuisine?"

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*,

premade bannock mix, such as Red River Bannock which is Metis owned, Bangin' Bannock owned in partnership by two Indigenous women, and restaurants that feature bannock such as Kekuli Cafe in British Columbia.

No matter where in Canada you call home, it's likely that colonial policies have changed the landscape and traditional foodways of the region in the last three centuries. This change can look like willful destruction of food sources, creating unsustainable infrastructure that reduces biodiversity, policing traditional practices, implementing starvation policies or refusing government aid, and policing traditional knowledge and cultural practices resulting in losing connections to land, food and teachings just to name a few. Lenore Newman, the author of *Speaking in Cod Tongues: A Canadian Culinary Journey* summed it up in an interview with CBC, "If we look at the history of colonization, the first settlers really relied on Indigenous foods, and collaborating with Indigenous people to stay fed [...] but when we get into the country-building period, we see food being used as a weapon."<sup>29</sup>

### **Reclaiming Foodways**

Instead of solely discussing the past, I wanted to end this episode with discussing the contemporary efforts that Indigenous communities are undertaking in the revitalization of Indigenous cuisine, and believe me when I tell you there are countless examples. Foodways and tradition are making a resurgence. On the grounds of Spadina House Museum in Toronto, a new Indigenous food sovereignty garden opened in the summer of 2022, aimed at sharing knowledge surrounding plants and their uses as well cultivating a garden of produce to actually consume. Hunting and fishing is making a resurgence, with many Indigenous content creators demonstrating how they cook, eat and preserve game meats they've hunted. When it comes to living with the land, the contemporary impacts of colonialism and pollution must be taken into consideration. With habitats at risk due to climate change, pollution and urban sprawl, the availability of foods, is continuing to diminish, but this is another story.

What has been so interesting about writing this episode is that it exposed how many Indigenous culinary ventures I was already aware of, and pointed me in the direction of more to check out. Just to give you an example of what's out there I'd like to discuss a few. Starting with Dashmaawaan Bemaadzinjin, located in Toronto. Started during the Pandemic, Dashmaawaan Bemadzinjin is a community-based food sovereignty organization that provides traditional foods to Elders and unhoused Indigenous people in Toronto.<sup>30</sup> They've expanded to cater for events,

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<sup>29</sup> CBC, "Food being used as a weapon": The lasting effects of colonialism on Indigenous food," CBC, October 6th 2017, <[<sup>30</sup> Amnesty International, "Dashmaawaan Bemaadzinjin," Amnesty International, <](https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/how-food-brings-indigenous-communities-together-1.4327345/food-being-used-as-a-weapon-the-lasting-effects-of-colonialism-on-indigenous-food-1.4343909#:~:text=Colonization%20not%20only%20deprived%20Indigenous.around%20hunting%20and%20eating%20seal.></a>></p></div><div data-bbox=)

and I've had the privilege of having one of their meals and it was fantastic. In Ottawa, where I'm currently living and attending school, a local Anishinaabe owned cafe, Beandigen, serves up coffee, baked goods by Kisisam Patisserie, and hosts regular beading circles and movie screenings. Dry goods companies like Pansawan are creating Pemmican for the retail market, making this traditional food available while supporting Indigenous owned businesses. Companies like Indigenous Box, located in Saskatchewan, often send out food products in their quarterly subscription box. I have a subscription myself and have tried products from Wabanaki Maple, and Boreal Heartland, a dry goods Indigenous company that makes tea blends and other food items from sustainable foraged plants from the Boreal Forest. In terms of training and tourism, Madahoki Farm near Ottawa provides a 2 month training program for Indigenous people interested in working in the culinary industry to learn more about traditional foodways and harvesting, business administration and more. In terms of culinary tourism, the Anishinaabe Wild Rice Experience based out of Thunder Bay offers seasonal experiences to harvest wild rice yourself, guided by the Friday Family, who can track their families' harvesting of wild rice back seven generations.<sup>31</sup> These examples only scratch the tip of the iceberg.

### **Recap**

This episode discussed quite a few things so let's wrap up with a recap. First we took a look at Canada's earliest cookbooks and the connection to Indigenous foodways. We know that Settlers relied upon the traditional knowledge of the areas they settled in to make it through the first few years, and seeing this appear in cookbooks only reinforces that point. However, we also took a look at how disconnected traditional teachings were with Settler knowledge of the same plants. We then looked at how colonialism at large affected foodways and practices through a variety of means such as Colonization Roads and over hunting. To wrap it all up, we looked at how Indigenous people across Canada are reclaiming traditional foodways and practices and asserting their place in the culinary field. If you enjoyed this episode I would encourage you to check out some of the resources I cited, see what your local First Nations have to offer in the way of food based teachings, check out products from some of the businesses and do more reading into the legacy of some of the colonial policies mentioned. Thankfully there is a wealth of information out there, and actionable steps you can take to learn and do more. I hope you enjoyed this episode and that it got you thinking a little differently about what we mean when we talk about culinary history in Canada.

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<sup>31</sup> Anishinaabe Wild Rice Experience, "Who We Are," <[https://www.wildriceexperience.com/who\\_we\\_are](https://www.wildriceexperience.com/who_we_are)>

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