

DINING
OUT *with*
HISTORY

DINING OUT *with* HISTORY

AT ATLANTIC CANADA'S HISTORIC SITES

Jan Feduck



Fitzhenry & Whiteside Limited

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*This book is dedicated to the Historic Sites of Canada.
I also lovingly dedicate this book to my family with
memories of our many travels together.*



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
--------------------	---

HISTORIC SITES MAP	2
--------------------------	---

NOVA SCOTIA

1	Eskasoni Cultural Journeys	5
2	Port-Royal National Historic Site	13
3	Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site	23
4	Le Village historique acadien de la Nouvelle-Écosse	33
5	Ross-Thomson House	43
6	Highland Village Museum	51
7	Balmoral Grist Mill	61
8	Sherbrooke Village	71
9	Ross Farm Museum	81
10	Africville Museum	91
11	Bluenose II	101
12	Memory Lane Heritage Village	111

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

13	Jean-Pierre Roma National Historic Site	121
14	Orwell Corner Historic Village	131

NEW BRUNSWICK

15	Village Historique Acadien	139
16	Kings Landing	149

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

17	L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site	159
18	Colony of Avalon National Historic Site	169
19	French Rooms Bread Oven	179
20	Battle Harbour National Historic District	189

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	198
-----------------------	-----

LIST OF RECIPES	200
-----------------------	-----

PHOTO CREDITS	202
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INTRODUCTION

“First we eat, then we do everything else.” —MFK Fisher

IT WAS A hot summer day and I stood in front of a blazing fire. I was a guest interpreter working with the other women in the Engineer’s kitchen at Fortress Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island. I wiped my hands on the heavy wool apron—part of my authentic 1700s clothing—and continued to knead dough. Curious visitors dropped by to watch and ask about what it was like to cook back in time. We shared our experiences and created a wee bit of time travel magic.

Each summer while living on the East Coast, I visit historic sites which share food traditions, and enjoy *chin wags* with the many knowledgeable and passionate interpreters who become characters from history every day.

This book takes the reader on a road trip to twenty of those historic sites in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador. Many cultures have added their tastes to the Maritime cooking pot. It has evolved to include the inherent knowledge of the indigenous peoples living from the

land, along with the tastes brought and shared by Nordic, French, African, Scottish, Irish, British and German immigrants.

Food traditions teach us about the indigenous plants that grew on the land and how they were used; what was hunted, fished and raised; what goods were traded from faraway lands and how cultures shared their recipes with others. Time and history have changed our food customs and yet, many of those early dishes continue to be served on our tables today.

Each chapter tours an historic site, tells a tale and shares a few recipes. The stories bring to life the cooking traditions of various periods, and set them in context; as we can see, food, work and life were inextricably linked. Then, as now, food was a vital part of sustaining community and fellowship. Although the stories are not based on facts, some have scatterings of truths woven into the words. Recipes from Eel soup to Flummies offer a chance to cook from the period.

...♦♦♦
"First we eat,
then we do
everything else."

MFK Fisher

...♦♦♦

QUÉBEC

NEW
BRUNSWICK

PRINCE EDWARD
ISLAND

UNITED STATES

NOVA SCOTIA

Village
Historique
Acadien

Grindstone
Island

King's
Landing

Orwell Corner
Historic Village

Jean Pierre
Roma

Highland Village
Museum

Balmoral
Grist Mill

Sherbrooke
Village

Ross Farm
Museum

Africville
Museum

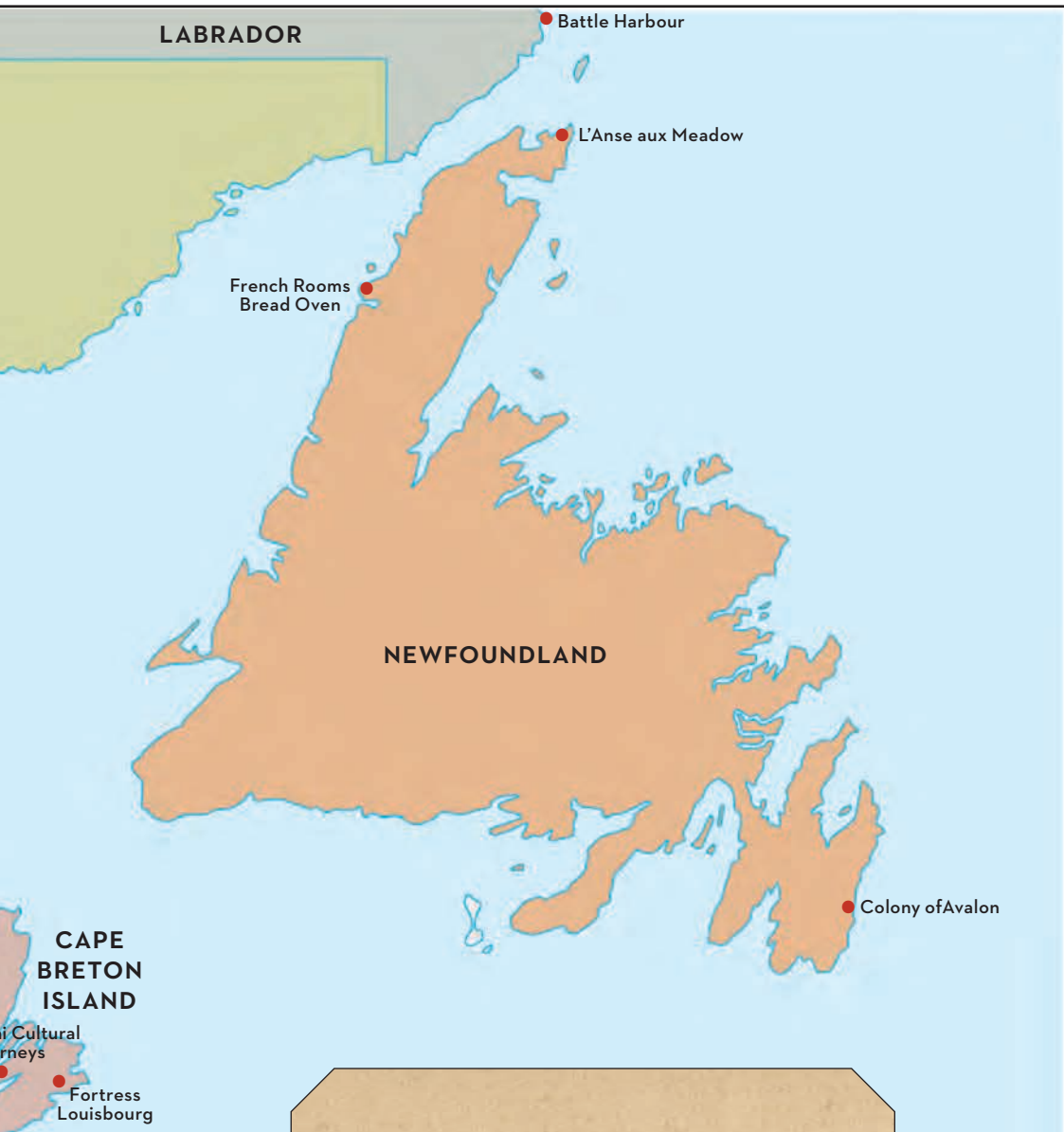
Memory Lane
Heritage
Village

Port Royal

Bluenose II

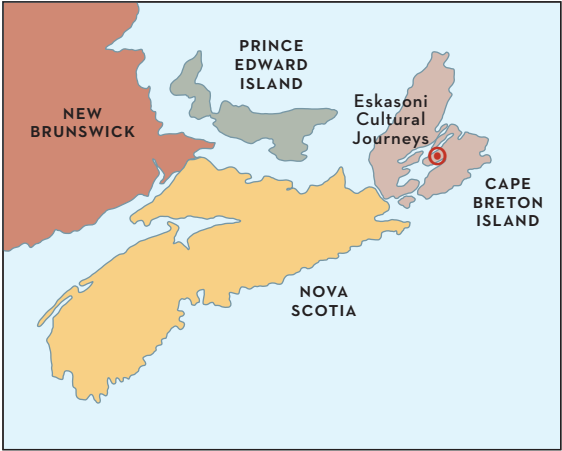
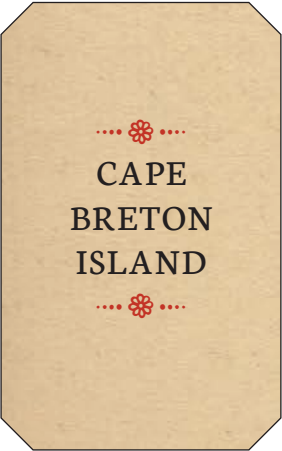
Le Village
Historique Acadien
de la Nouvelle-Écosse

Ross Thomson
House and
Store



HISTORICAL SITES

I hope you enjoy this delicious journey through
the tastes of our past; why not settle in at the table,
and dine out with history?



CHAPTER 1

CAPE BRETON ISLAND

ESKASONI CULTURAL JOURNEYS

The First on This Land

Pjila'si (WELCOME, COME IN and sit down), suggests the sign greeting visitors to Goat Island on the shoreline close to Bras d'Or Lake.

Eskasoni is the largest Mi'kmaq community and was declared a reserve in 1832. It is a growing, prospering community with a strong sense of cultural pride.

Eskasoni Cultural Journeys has created an experience inviting visitors to travel into the past of the Eskasoni peoples, who were the first to live in that area for many centuries before the Europeans arrived.

A guided tour takes guests on a winding two and-a-half kilometre path through the forests that have for time everlasting been home to the Eskasoni. In clearings along the walk, visitors are greeted by Eskasoni interpreters who offer demonstrations and talks to show different aspects of how their people lived in the past.

Matt, one of the guides, leads visitors down the path dressed in a soft deerskin tunic ornately painted with symbols of his culture. Matt is a gifted storyteller who stops often to share a tale or point out a medicinal plant. He shares with passion his deep

knowledge and appreciation of his cultural roots.

At one clearing in the forest, visitors learn about and participate in a smudging ceremony, to experience the spirituality of this purifying tradition. Sweetgrass is lit and passed around to each person.

In another clearing is a display of the fishing and hunting tools that were used to provide food prior to the arrival of the Europeans. Each tool is explained along with traditions such as the unique long-handled forks used to fish for eels. Reverence for nature is evident in the fishing and hunting practice of taking only what was needed from the land and water, and using all of it.

A partially built rounded long-house demonstrates how a warm abode could be made from materials provided by nature. Flexible branches form the frame and bark is placed over the frame.

In a clearing by a lake, visitors experience the power of the drumbeat and the importance of dance, as they are invited to participate.

Still further along the path, a campfire is burning where guests

make and eat *Four Cents Bread*, a simple and quick bread. Flour, salt, baking powder and water are mixed together and kneaded into a roll. It is then wrapped around a stick, baked over the fire and enjoyed dipped in molasses with a cup of tea.

Around a table at another stop, the techniques of basketry are taught; visitors learn to weave reeds into a bookmark to take home as a reminder of an extraordinary experience.

Eskasoni Cultural Journeys gives all who visit a deeper understanding

and appreciation of how the Eskasoni peoples once lived, as shared through the stories and experiences of those who live now. In all they do, their love and respect for the land, water, and their culture endures.

The Mi'kmaq communities living on the Bras d'Or Lake of Cape Breton Island have hunted eel as a food source for centuries. Eel is cooked in soups, stews or roasted and is now considered a delicacy. Eel has always been fished with respect.







BELOW: Sugar, an interpreter, cooks eel stew.

FISHING MY FIRST EEL

by Shelley Denny

I REMEMBER THE FIRST time I went eel spearing. It was a calm summer evening and the water was so still. I climbed into the boat without my shoes and my pants rolled up. It was late, 11:30 p.m., so I was trying to be quiet as we pushed the boat out from the shore with the light attached to the bow of the boat. A kind man and a friend of a friend took along one other person, and off we went.

Pushing the boat with the eel spear, I was reminded of how to look for eels. "Look for something like smaller logs but with a shadow." As I pushed from the back of the boat, we were quiet, searching. And then I saw one. Without thinking I thrust the spear and held it down to the sand, reminded again not to lift the spear just yet. The eel must wrap itself around the spear before I could bring it into the boat. The eel must give itself to me. All I could feel was the strength of the eel through the spear. I had to keep both hands on the spear. I couldn't lose my first eel!

Doing as I was instructed, I held on until I saw the eel wrap itself around the base of the spear. I brought it up quickly and got it into the boat. I was so proud of myself, yet humbled by the eel's strength and offering - like it transferred its spirit to me through the spear. I knew then what Mi'kmaw responsibility was. And then I did it again.

I saw the second eel and thrust the spear. "I think you missed," my friend said. "No, I got it." Again, I waited. Not long but it felt like forever before the eel let me bring it in.

What an amazing experience. I was so honoured to spear eels as my ancestors did and as my people continue to do. That night, I thanked the eels and Creator for that honour.

Shelley Denny holds a PhD in Fisheries Governance and shares her first eel fishing experience.

FOUR CENTS BREAD

Courtesy of Eskasoni Cultural Journeys - Our Favourite Recipes

- 2 cups flour
- 2 Tbsp baking powder
- Water, as needed to make a dough texture

THIS BREAD COULD be cooked by forming the dough into a disc shape and cooking over the fire on a metal sheet or by wrapping it around a stick and cooking it directly over the fire.

The ingredients in this bread are common to simple bread made the world over. For our First Nations peoples, this bread could be made in their village, or as they hunted and travelled.



EEL STEW

- Eel
- Water
- Salt and Pepper
- Onion
- Dumplings
- 1 cup flour

BOIL WATER WITH some salt. Chop onion and cook in water.

Then add eel, potatoes, salt and pepper.

Cook until tender and add dumplings.

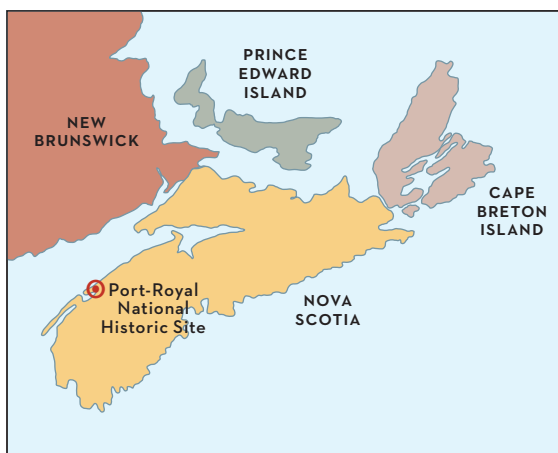
Add salt and pepper to flour and add water to mix until it forms a firm ball.

Add to eel stew, cover and cook for 20 minutes.





.... ❁
PORT
ROYAL,
NOVA
SCOTIA
.... ❁



This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for handwriting practice. There is no text or other markings on the page.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.