BLOCK ISLAND COOKBOOK

A COLLECTION OF FAVORITE RECIPES

COMPILED BY

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL BUILDERS
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
BLOCK ISLAND, RHODE ISLAND
1962
The Sunday School Builders of the 1st Baptist Church, Block Island, Rhode Island, proudly present to our friends everywhere, the first Block Island cook book ever to be published, so far as we know. Because it is the first such book, we have tried to preserve in it for future cooks, some of the time-honored "receipts" of our grandmothers, as well as to present some of today's modern streamlined cooking.

The ladies of the Island have long been known for their good cooking. A distinguished daughter, Miss Catherine Ray, later to become the wife of Rhode Island's Governor William Greene, sent her life-long friend, one Benjamin Franklin, a gift of Block Island cheeses which he and his friends pronounced excellent, and also a gift of Sugar Plums, "every one sweet'n'd as you used to like."

The Indians gave us the "No Cake" and very probably the hulled corn and the hasty pudding. The early settlers, being of necessity almost completely self-sufficient, relied heavily on corn and cornmeal.

We have returned in nostalgia to the time, not really so many years ago, when every family had a pickle barrel in the cellar, complete with the delectable, quite indigestible, Jerusalem artichoke ("hardchoke" to our fathers). Tempus fugit -- was it only yesterday when Johnny cake -- thick or thin, scalded or unscalded according to family tradition -- appeared on Island tables at least twice and sometimes three times a day, when hot biscuits appeared at least once and tea was the preferred beverage? Was it only yesterday that a fish could be had just for the asking? Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis!

We are grateful to the many friends who have shared their treasured recipes with us. We are sorry indeed that we do not have space to print them all. We are grateful, too, for the unfailing support and interest our friends have given us in this and other ventures. In the sincere hope that you will be pleased with the result, we offer herewith our chef d'oeuvre, dedicated to all devotees of Block Island cookery -- past, present and future. May "good digestion wait on appetite and health on both."
BAKED BLUE FISH

Florence M. Millikin

Fillet blue fish. Place skin side down in shallow baking dish. Sprinkle well with salt and pepper. Dot with butter or margarine. Cover with milk. Bake in med. oven 1/2 - 3/4 hour.

BAKED BLUE FISH

Amadee Smith

Sent in by Mary Tinker

3 lbs. of Blue Fish

11/2 c. of fresh milk

Butter

Cut slices of fat salt pork 1/4 inch thick and lay in the baking pan. Lay fish on top of pork, rub with flour, sprinkle with salt and pepper to season. Dot generously with butter. Add the milk and bake in a hot oven for forty-five minutes. It depends on the size of fish how much milk to use. The bottom of pan must be covered.

BAKED STRIPED BASS

J. M. L.

1 - 6 or 8 lb. striped bass

Thin cream, onion dressing or your own favorite dressing

Sliced salt pork

Have bass dressed with backbone in it, score on both sides about 2" apart and place in buttered dripping pan. Put dressing inside fish near the nape. Salt and pepper on both sides. Cut strips of pork and place on cuts, fasten in place with toothpicks. Bake in 400 degree oven for 1 hour. Add thin cream, enough to cover bottom of dripping pan or a little more. Cook for 15 minutes more, until light brown, basting occasionally. Serves 6 or 8.

BAKED WHOLE FISH

Thelma Tinker Murphy

Clean and scale a 4 - 5 lb. cod or haddock leaving head and tail on. Put grated onion over the entire fish after it has been well washed and dried. The onion should be on it for at least 2 hours before it is put in the oven. Salt the fish well.

Stuff the fish and close loosely with thread or skewers. Grease outside of fish well with oleomargarine or oil. Put a piece of heavy aluminum foil in baking pan, and place fish on it. Bacon slices may be put on top or baste frequently with oleomargarine. Bake in 325 degree oven, 18 - 20 minutes per pound. When done lift to a platter on the foil. Fold back one side and carefully slide on to the platter. Garnish with parsley and lemon slices.

Stuffing For Baked Fish:

5 c. cubed day-old white bread

1/2 c. melted butter

2 med. onions chopped very fine

1 egg beaten and mixed with enough milk to make a moist stuffing

1/2 c. celery (stalks and leaves) chopped very fine

Add in the order given and mix well. Garlic salt may be added if desired. Bake extra stuffing in double thickness of heavy aluminum foil (closed).

BOILED LOBSTER

Lobster should be alive when boiled. Most Islanders prefer to boil their lobsters in sea water and to eat them hot with plenty of melted butter and a touch of vinegar. In fact, the Islanders eschew all manner of fancy cookery where sea food is concerned, preferring not to mask the taste of these delectable gifts of God in any manner, other than to cook them quickly and well with a minimum of ostentation.

If you have no sea water, use enough water to cover lobster completely and add 1 Tbsp. salt for each qt. of water. The Portuguese add pepper to the water and this is a good touch if you like pepper. When the water is boiling, grasp lobster firmly by the middle of the back with the claws held away so it cannot nip, straighten tail and plunge lobster head first into the water. Cover kettle and simmer 15 to 20 minutes, depending on size of the lobster. Overcooking toughens the meat. Plunge lobster immediately into cold water to stop the cooking.

BROILED LOBSTER

Kill the lobster by inserting sharp knife into joint where tail and body-shell come together, thus cutting the spinal cord. Place lobster on back, make deep incision at mouth and with a quick cut, split lobster lengthwise to end of tail. Open and remove stomach, intestinal vein running length of body, liver and coral. Save liver and coral for sauce. Crack large claws. Spread lobster as flat as possible, place split side up on greased broiler; brush with melted butter, sprinkle lightly with salt and pepper. Broil slowly for 15 to 20 minutes or until delicately browned.
fresh tarragon leaves of course garlic salt
1 c. dry wine or sherry

Wash and scrub mussel shells until really clean; dull work but worth it! Place cleaned mussels in large skillet and add all ingredients. Cover with tight fitting lid and cook over hot fire for about 15 minutes or until mussels open. Serve in soup plates, with large napkins!

HOW TO CAN TUNA FISH
From cookbook of Phoebe Sheffield Dodge

Soak tuna overnight or 3 to 4 hours in cold water. Add salt to season. This draws the blood out. Change water twice while soaking. Cut raw tuna in pieces. Cook one half hour. Cool. Take out black meat (remove skin before soaking). Pack in jars. Fill with boiling water. Put in hot water bath and cook 1 hour after water starts to boil.

HOW TO CAN LOBSTER
From cookbook of Phoebe Sheffield Dodge

Cook lobsters (not too done), pick out of shells, wash in cold water and put in jars. Add good pinch of salt to each pint jar. Fill to top with cold water (run a knife down side to get air bubbles out). Put on rubber sealing ring and 1 clasp down. Cook in hot bath 3 hours after water starts to boil.

HOW TO CAN TUNA
Mrs. Robert Albert Sanchez, 3d

Strip off all skin and bones and cut up into chunks. Take out and discard all dark meat. Put in big pan and cover with water in which you have dissolved 1/4 c. salt. Let stand overnight. In the morning take out fish and pack evenly into sterilized jars up to the neck of the jar. Place in each jar 1 Tbsp. butter and 1 tsp. salt. Fill with boiling water. Process 2 1/2 hours in hot water bath with one clasp down and then another 2 hours with the other clasp tightened.

BROILED TUNA
Mrs. Robert Albert Sanchez, 3d

Cut tuna into steaks. Put in pan, cover with water in which you have dissolved 2 Tbsp. salt. Let stand an hour or so. Dry and fry or broil.

FISH HASH
Eunice M. Dodge

2 c. cold salt codfish, flaked
2 c. cold boiled potatoes, diced
1 Tbsp. minced onion
1 egg, beaten well
1/4 tsp. pepper

Combine ingredients and fry in small amount of butter or Crisco until golden brown. Serve with a tossed green salad.

FISH PUDDING
Mrs. LeGatha Peterson

2 lbs. Haddock (skinned and boned)
2 Tbsp. flour
1/2 c. milk
1 1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. pepper
1/4 tsp. thyme
2 eggs, not beaten

Put fish through food grinder 3 times. In a bowl mix fish, eggs, seasonings, milk and flour. Beat with an electric mixer, at high speed for 2 minutes. Pack into a well buttered casserole dish and bake in a moderate oven, 350 degrees, for 40 to 45 minutes.

This pudding may be eaten as it comes hot from the oven and is good served with a medium white sauce. Also may be sliced cold or fried.

FISH SAUCE
Mrs. Haddon E. Nelson

1 can condensed cream of mushroom soup - milk
1/3 c. sharp Cheddar cheese - shredded

Or:

1 can condensed cream of vegetable soup - milk
1/3 c. sharp Cheddar cheese - shredded

Heat the soup carefully, add the cheese, and just enough milk to make the mixture the consistency of cream sauce.

We enjoy this very much on baked, broiled or fried fish of almost any kind.

NORWEGIAN SALT FISH
Mrs. Gretchen Dodge

Using any firm, white-meatied fish, cut into serving pieces. Put in kettle of cold water to which salt has been added in the proportion of 6 Tbsp. salt to 2 qts. water.
ELDERBERRY BLOSSOM SALVE
Mrs. Robert Schofield

1 c. fresh picked elderberry  1 c. petroleum jelly or two blossoms free from branch  A dollop of perfume and leaves

Melt jelly over very low heat. Add blossoms, let stew a minute or so. Strain, add perfume, I make this every year. It is good for insect bites, chapped lips, minor abrasions and so forth. Press as many blossoms as the jelly will take. This is a very old recipe but in the original rendered lard was used.

ELDERBERRY BLOSSOM TEA  Mrs. Robert Schofield

Dry the blossoms, steep for tea. Add sugar and lemon. It is a pleasant tea and supposed to be good for a cold.

FOR A COUGH  E. L. L.

3 Tbsp. each of lemon juice, honey and glycerine

Mix well and take.

AN OLD COUGH SIRUP  Mrs. Jeanne Wilde Riel

Take one large beet and hollow out the inside. Take rock candy and fill hollow, then bake in oven at 375 degrees until candy is melted. Put this in jar and feed often to any age person.

COUGH SYRUP  Nathalie Dodge

1/2 pt. gin  1/2 oz. paregoric
1 oz. glycerine  1/4 c. granulated sugar

COUGH SYRUP
Found in an Old Block Island Cookbook by Nathalie Dodge

A few pieces of sea moss. Boil 10 minutes, strain, add juice of one or two lemons.

FOR BAD COUGH  Submitted by Cemantha Mitchell Wilde

1/2 molasses (light)  1/2 rum

Let it set for couple of days. Shake it now and then, and it could be taken when needed. It's good for the throat and loosens the cough. I used to make it.

Note: Make one cup at a time and store in refrigerator.

BREAD POULTICE  Emerline Mitchell
Sent in by Mary Tinker

Take stale bread crumbs, pour over them boiling water. Boil until softened, stirring well. Take from fire and gradually stir in a little glycerine or sweet oil, so as to render the poultice pliable when applied. The amount of bread used depends upon the size of plaster needed. Apply as hot as can be used, on clean cloth.

CURE FOR RINGWORM  Emerline Mitchell
Sent in by Mary Tinker

Use yellow dock, root or leaves, steeped in vinegar, will cure the worst case of ringworm.

CURE FOR FELONS  Emerline Mitchell
Sent in by Mary Tinker

Take common rock salt, as used for salting pork, dry in the oven, then pound it fine and mix with spirits of turpentine in equal parts. Put it in a cloth and wrap it around parts affected. As it gets dry put on more. In twenty four hours the painful Felon will be dead.

COUGH SYRUP

Put into a saucepan:

1 pt. best grade light molasses  A few pieces of dried Sweet Flag Root - cut up fine
1 tsp. powdered white ginger  1 Tbsp. butter

Set over fire and simmer slowly for 45 minutes, stirring frequently. Do not let it boil. Remove from fire. Cool and cover.
BUTCHERING

Gone with the winds of yesterday are the memories of Butchering Day (pronounced boo'chering) when the closest neighbors would arrive bright and early to help with the slaughter. There had to be a nice balance between having enough men to help with the work and not so many that the supply of fresh meat would be seriously depleted, for etiquette demanded that all helpers be given a piece of fresh meat to take home. They, in turn, would repay this favor when they butchered. In this way (before the days of the deep freeze and the professional butcher who presents one with the fait accompli -- the carcass scraped, cleaned and ready to be cut up into neat packages for the freezer) the meat was consumed at the peak of freshness. Woe betide any man too stingy to abide by this strict unwritten rule! He was consigned to Outer Dogpatch socially and not invited to take part in another year's festivities -- for festivities there were, since these gatherings furnished an opportunity for the men to partake of the flowing bowl in more or less generous quantities. Even if mine host were totally abstemious himself, good form required that he furnish these libations to the acolytes who followed the ritual of The Butchering.

While the men were getting into the mood of the occasion, the women of the household, with the help of any of the neighboring women who might have been able to come to help, were heating great kettles of water for scalding the hog in a large barrel or hogshead and preparing to serve the hearty "pluck" dinner which was traditional on Butchering Day.

If all went well, the hog would be "stuck" with the sharpest of knives, strung up, bled out, dipped into the barrel of scalding water, bristles scraped off with bell-shaped metal scrapers, the entrails "drawn" and the liver or "pluck" taken into the house to be cooked for dinner.

MENU FOR PLUCK DINNER
(Traditional dinner served on hog-butchering day to the people who come to help)

- Pluck (this is the liver, heart and lights plucked from the hog being butchered on that day)
- Fried onions
- Stewed pumpkin
- Brown bread, baked or steamed
- Apple and Squash Pies
- Mashed or boiled potatoes
- Tea
You've got your man. You mean to keep him.

Today, wise wife, you have to do some real preserving

to hold your man.

Start with a full measure of Faith, that brooks no
interferences--not the imitation brand diluted with dis-
ruptive jealousy. Protective jealousy is O.K.

Habitually tickle his palate with the healthy home-
made concoction of wholesome diet, hot and ready --
good antidote to itchy feet. Give him the milk of sympa-
thetic understanding of his problems, especially when
he comes in depressed.

Eat leisurely, don't hurry from table; serve his
could-be favorite cordial, your own sparkling self.
Remember, small talk is a good digestive pill.

Keep a supply of sweet talk, wisely measured --
pleasing chatter on things agreeable, not omitting one he
knows most about, is not bad for gloomy mornings.

Pepper his spirits occasionally with commendations:
of his smart appearance, his wit, his achievements, not
omitting his friends.

For any repeated ornary moods, shock-treat him.
Rub in a garlic clove of well placed verbal kick-in-the-
pants. Speak up! He'll respect you for it.

Savor loving times with the salty request for his
super assistance at some (any old) task or problem.
Maybe press his pants in return. To serve is to love.

Frequently mix in your rare smile when least ex-
pected -- not overlooking clever commendation of his
admiration of another woman's good looks. Keep yours
as good, especially ever after the twelfth anniversary.

As you pass by, touch his face or arm with the pat
that lends a flavor much needed in marital establish-
ments. Don't take it for granted that your preservative works
without sentimental seasoning. Express love any time.

Play a record of quiet music, the pleasing note that
soothes. For spice, the music of laughter. Be silly. It
counteracts grumpiness.

Add one much neglected sweetener that never fails
as mixer: your prayers. Omission here has left husbands
heir to disturbing ills. Its fervent use is said to "avail
much". Old-fashioned prayer at mealtime is still sweet.

One vital home remedy which you do not advertise
but which goes far in preserving marriage is genuine