The Journal of a Kitchen Witch - began Jan 11/93

by Melodie Lane

to begin the journey of my kitchen witch self i must say that my memories of culinary activity are, in the beginning ~~are~~ scattered and still evolving.

my mother and i made ketchup in the summer of 1945 at uncle charlie's farm in southern sask. mom had fled; jack and i in tow; to escape the rationing of food ~~stuffs~~ in moosejaw.

i would ~~climb~~ on the kitchen counter and reach over the sink to the little shelf there ~~and~~ secretly inspect visually and tactilly; the tokens for butter milk eggs and other life necessary things. i preferred the royal blue ones - they were for butter. i still love butter.

also on that flat farm was a calf which i insisted on calling gerry after myself. we planted row after row of onions dug potatoes looked at the white fuzzy spit on the weeds and worried the grasshoppers.

uncle charlie had a floor model radio with a head set. each evening after chores were done and dinner downed he would sit in his chair and listen to the silence of world war two news. women and children protected from the holocaust by that awe inspiring silence. we knew nothing until the day of armistice and mom went running out the front gate laughing and crying, "the war is over , the war is over'. she ran towards the bells ringing in the village down the dirt prairie road- church bells ringing - still ringing in my childhood head. i sometimes still hear those bells and sometimes i am still that little girl with hay coloured braids swinging on that gateway to a new world.

on to other kitchens where after that there was always a radio talking jingles singing funny songs about petunias in onion patches and katie at the garden gate.

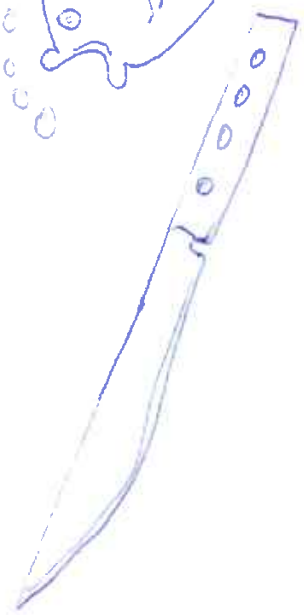
for some time after the farm i don't seem to have much stored in the old memory bank. my father came home on a stretcher and perhaps that trauma is significant. i do remember playing in the fields of waving grasses on the edge of moosejaw. heads of wheat imprinted on my retinas forever.

we counted cars on the trains at crossings. went to some weddings. once ~~after~~ when my handsome youngest uncle got wed to a gorgeous prairie redhead and i had played with the big turtle in the stock water tank we drove thru gumbo, to catch honey moon trains. aunt betty was so beautiful in her long white gown red hair flying in the wet wind pushing the model t or a on to whereever.

i remember there was lots of food on huge plates and the big people were laughing and talking a lot but i was truely in love with this creature in white and followed her everywhere sitting at her feet during speeches.

i had had my hair braided at a hairdressers in french braids and was very proud. another momentous occurance during that weekend was while standing on the railway platform my mother, dark and petite, introduced me to another new relative; aunt bunny; tall and fair. i never saw her again but was so impressed by her name of fantasy. - imagine

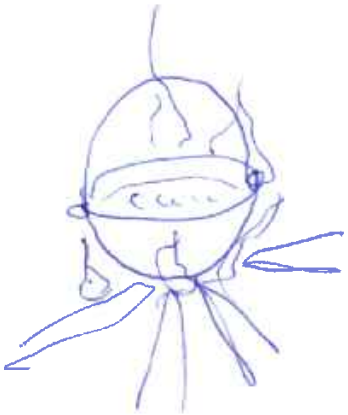
how my world expanded that exciting time when i got two new ladies in my family; one a ~~bleach~~ blean



breathtaking redhead in a white satin gown and the other a laughing blond in high heels called bunny.

oh those wondering wonderous years of innocense.

then there was all that fish. fish with scales and tails and claws and shells. catfish with whiskers at the lunenburg fish fair. bunny reappeared briefly as a skinned rabbit for a dinner of tears. the eels sliding out of the newspaper onto the counter were also not well received. my life threatening experience as a cook began in those days by the eastern sea. there is a very visible scar on my left first finger from trying to cut home made taffy with the big knife. as i recall i have always paid dearly for my sweettooth. there was that halcyon day at low tide on some deserted beach where our family and several others - university pals of my parents - we chased the elusive clams. with each spurt of water we would dig and dig, sometimes finding those delightful little creatures in their crusty shells. into baskets and pails they would go. one of those creatures, being quite determined to go on to calm heaven i suppose, very neatly clamped onto my finger and i could not release it. being an adventuress even then, i was digging some distance from the protective clan and had to run willy nilly screaming as only a terrified child can scream, towards the others. the clam was extracted and i don't remember if that clam was pitched into the sea or the pot.



back at the cottage surrounded by those wonderful scraggly east coast pines we boiled those little critters over a huge open fire in giant black cauldrens. huge bowls full of open shelled delights were piled on the pic nic tables

we were instucted to eat only the open ones; dip them in melted butter ~~and~~ then lemon juice. then the moment of truth - toss back your head and open your mouth and drop the warm glistening morsel down your throat. no chewing allowed. dozens later, sated and tired i drifted off to a sleep of salty aired pine filled sand touched sleep.

already I ~~was dreaming~~ dreamt of soaring gulls crashing waves sea ~~sea~~ scented paradise.

we ambled and rambled the vacant fields and laneways, dear little jack and i. picking wild strawberries on the rolling hills beyond the edge of town. we never brought any home but enjoyed the immediate gratification of plucking those tiny red hearts and squished them in our mouths free of the restrictions of table manners and sullied tastebuds of adulthood.

i still stoop and pluck those little memories of childhood when ever they come into view on trailside.

there was icecream and chocolate milk at school lunches for awhile but not much else , i discovered soft icecream at the saturday movies. didn't like it much. to this day i allow myself the favoured crispie crunch chocolate bar from the corner store. there are vague recollections of fish and chips wrapped in newspaper from some place near where mom worked. a very rare treat to have store bought food. my ketchup habit remained healthy with such things. i was well used to being teased by my dad about my prediliction for that savory chinese fish sauce. i was called the "ketchup kid." later I passed the name along to my youngest son Sean, "Ketchup Kid Junior".

there was sad little ruthie, the housekeepers' whining daughter
who we decided to wreak revenge on one april fools day.
jack and i got mom, i guess, to help us make a confection
called april fool chocolates. we cut bar soap into inch square
cubes and dipped them in melted semi sweet bakers chocolate.
neatly arranged on a plate we placed them on the lunch table.
when mom at work.
ruthie always wanted everything going so she dived in with
gusto. we were rewarded with sputtering and tears from ruthie
and a severe scolding from her mother. soon after that we
got a new housekeeper. someone much more interesting.

there was the chinese grocer whose wife had shared a room in
the hospital with my mother when i was born. seemed fair
enough cause to hop on my trike and peddle downtown and demand
protection in the form of a pear. i love pears dearly. my
visits were quickly stopped.

place with Moneyjar.

often on the way to a particular movie house in halifax i
would buy huge chunks of bulk dates. i would salve the wounds
of the world in that dark place by eating those sweet exotic
fruits.
i learned how to make baked apples with butter and cinnamon
even raisins sometimes.
and brown sugar - the house fragrant with spice and anticipation. i ate the ~~skim~~ brown crust off rice pudding custard and picked
out the soft juicy raisins. fudge and pull taffy; popcorn and
little sweet peas from a can. corn niblets and cold beans
from a can, ketchup and beans a favorite campfire food.
roasted marshmellows and burnt hot dogs with cold buns and
sweet pickle relish and tumeric loaded mustard.

in ottawa i continued my speed swimming activities with a city club, commuting each sat. to the pool. for 24 hrs. Before each meet my coach would have me follow a regimin of a 24 hour fast with only grapefruit juice, in large quantities i won a lot of heats and to this day love grapefruit juice. its benefits the well known vitamin c plus its tangy bite and a myriad of good memories associated with that guy. during certain training periods i would visit his home that he shared with his young wife and an baby. they lived on the river and had a beach outside their winterized cottage. looking back they could probably best be described as bohemian. their tags and bone lifestyle glorified by their generous spirits. i'm sure they must have known somehow how desperate my life was, covered as it was by a will to go faster and faster in the water; my tiny, anorexic body churning up the pool , the only escape i had.

mom had a potatoe patch behind our wartime bungalow and every day i was sent out with a can to pick the beetles off the plants and drop them in the kerosene. they were beautiful, and red, with spots. my first experience of biology. dad was not home much during those times. as a government researcher he was in states and when in ottawa he had his party pals so we saw little of him. boze was it. he brought ontario margarine home with little buttons of dye to be squished and mised in the plastic bag. it was cheap and illegal in the quebec economy.

i got my girl guide cooking badge while there. my piece de resistence was pork chops with mushroom soup gravey, mashed

potatoes and canned peas. ketchup, an integral aspect of such food at home was disallowed. the woman testing me was a jehovah witness and they didn't permit such foods. i wonder if there's a connection between their resistance to blood transfusions and kethup?

at this time mom had tried her hand at ginger beer, an accompaniment to dad's home brew. it was pale gold, clear and bubbly. the finest hour of that fizzy brew was a summer afternoon on the back porch with perhaps a ½ dozen of the neighbour hood kids. mom kept the ginger beer flowing and yodelled each time she came out with another batch. it was great fun and we all had a jolly good laugh. a little inebriated and full of good will. in spite of the fun that day my favorite soda was cream soda, pink please. i now have a rare rootbeer.

one other memory on the topic of "pop" is that on the roadsides of nova scotia we used to buy that same ginger beer. could be that mom got the idea there.

by this time i was 'doing the dishes' and general clean up. already roles had been defined. i did the dishes which took maybe an hour; clearing, refrigerating, wiping, etc. jack took out the garbage.

the only advantage in my task was becoming familiar with food. the scale of a family meal. timing, condiments, colour. silverwear had to be polished, glasses rinsed, pots srubbed. soap was no longer just for getting my body clean. soap was a household commodity. it wasn't until some years later i remembered making soap with grandma vanerburgh in the backyard of her indian head home. wecooked the fat, saved from

a winter of heavy meat and potatoe meals, to those drippings was aded lye mae with the ashes of the fire. walking down basement stairs in an old home i can still see the bucket of muted yellow shavings of soap used for laundry. another use she threatened to use the soap for was to wash my mouth out with ~~that soap~~ when i called her granny. around and around the dining room table we would go; me calling out 'granny, granny, granny; it was great fun and to this day i associate soap not with cleanliness but that der old gal with puple hair..

setting the kitchen table for regular meals was one of my routines. learning about the different forks for this and that, napkins under the knife, salt and pepper and the famous ketchup were all daily tasks. mom wasn't working at this time so she did the cooking and i probably peeled. the chip wagon went by on fridays and occasionally we would get some. mom was always worried about money so such treats were rare.

the kitchen in aylmer, quebec was cute, large enough to eat in. there were gingham curtains, red and white check and othe coordinated touches. seems to me we had some of those plaster cast figures on the wass but i can't remember what they were - spanish dancers perhaps.

once we had moved to toronto my life became more hectic. I not only went to school but also worked part time. all on top of helping mom. the daughter of one of dad's associates had me over for a little dinner party. dessert was a parfait. there was stale cake with jam at the bottom and sweet cream sauce over all. with boyfriends came trips to outer world. coffee breaks with

cigarettes. toasted persians with melted butter. burgers and grilled cheese sandwiches. at the cne i was introduced to westerns.

the grilled cheese was first attemted in the oven. cheese on bread under the grill until bubbley. very good with ketchup for dipping. the traditional restaurant grilled cheese was finally masteredby frying the sandwich in butter in a cast iron fry pan. my kids love that one. still a standard with tomatoe soup on the side, a huge dill pickle also goes well.

during this toronto period dad was home more often. he had gotten out of the army with an early retirement and was making his way in industry. for the first time in my life i lived in non service areas. i was about to loose my 'camp follower' status. he would sometimes make chicken livers with mushrooms. he would brown the liver and mushrooms in butter then slowly add a flour and cold water misture shook in a glass jar to make the gravey. of course there was lots of salt and pepper. then the mixture would be allowed to simmer for 20 minutes or so and served on toast. in later years i would see this combo at truck stops on my many cross country expeditions. it is one of the meat dishes i still allow myself; a sentimental journey.

another toronto food experience wasvisits to famous old town and country tavern and buffet. the whole family, now 7, would haul off to to fill our faces, ~~the original~~ that incredible pot luck. Dessert was brought to table on carts which we could choose from. Those were days of hope.

then there ~~was~~ were the broiled cheeseburgers. dad would make patties of ground round, broil them and then melt chedar cheese on them before putting them in buns and loading them with lettuce, tomatoe, onion, etc. etc. ketchup was still a very favorite thing for me.my approach to that old ~~favorite~~ is to pan fry or bar-b-q the meat ; often with added garic and or wooster sauce. cheese is melted ~~under~~ a pot lid and served the old way.kaiser buns ~~often~~ in lieu of replace ~~the~~ burger buns. another kitchen legacy from my father is clam chowder. baby clams from a can added to acouple of cooked potatoes~~,~~ in their water and ~~&~~ chopped onion; add clams, juice and all to potatoes ~~and cooking water~~. shake a tablespoon of flour with ½ cup cold water, add and stir.

a big gob of butter, salt and pepper. simmer for 20 mins. of so and serve. Cup of Milk added mixed.

so far everything mentioned is comfort food. and so be it. all my food ~~are~~ is from the comfort zone. whenever i try a new recipeit has to make me feel good. if not the recipe goes on the shelf- and stays there, a learning experience, a reference. while living in scarboro i ~~got~~ had a job job. i worked thurs and fri nites and saturdays at a hunt's bakery. i admit to a sweet tooth and ~~a~~ the bakery while not putting any fat on the frame certainly gave me pimples.fresh breads,rolls , pastries on a regular basis gave me an opportunity to begin to make ~~conscious~~ personal choices about food.

there was a small deli section of salads, homemade style candies. with the savories of individual pot pies,sausage rolls

and cheese buns, i began to become a small g gourmet. later i would work in a super store, i think it was a loblaw's familiarity breeds contempt and developed a strong distaste for mall produced food stuffs of any kind. lots of cheap choices did not appeal even then. i have a vivid memory of learning how to say fuck there altho i didn't know what it meant. more cheap choice i suspect. between girl guide and brownie camp and cookie sales; counselling a t summer camps; i was introduded to big kitchens and broom handling. love food as i do i dislike the atmosphere of intensity that dominates most such places. food has never been fun except with my children. i prefer to eat in restaurants; not because the food is better but because no one can dictate your choices there altho some try. it is a sad memory of my honey moon that recalls how that particular x would never choose anything from the menu until i had ordered; then he would order. most often, if he didn't order the same item he would go thru a disturbing comparison of our foods and my appetite would deflate. it wasn't until long after that sorry time was over that my gusto for food returned. i wasn't anorexic. i was turned off. the introduction to his mother's cooking was to discover upon arrival for that first dinner, that she had hit his father over the head with the apple strudle. clyde laughed in his mellowed out way; tad snapped and poor old ashbyshrivelled.

later there was roast beef- rare- and quite fine. i had never had it that way ~~in a house~~. & yorkshire pudding, ~~in tad's way~~ of complimenting herceltic tradition. there were other meals. i had them up for chili - based on mom's recipe. thy found all the spices unusual; i wasn't even putting inchili peppers in those days.

the instructions for cooking eggs was rough. just fuckin' sta nd there, tip the pan and spoonthe bacon fat over yolks until they glaze over white. later, much later there was syd and his 'i want two fried eggs'. fried eggs have become 'over easy' - and that's the way i cook 'em and like 'em. GOT THAT GUYS!

i would be dishonest not to mention i have rarely been motivated to cook for a man.

my motivation has always been selfish.

i like to eat.

now mark my words, ~~as some historical figure might say~~ - women are the providers.

the really good recipes follow in text - intertwined with the autobiographical
bullshit

in some senses my cooking experience is from need. my x-husband took me out to dinner once, spontaneously we went to a steak house in peterborough - dark reddy drapes and candleabra. waiters in black, white and tie. we sat there in candlelight and ate ~~overcooked~~ steaks and i mused - this ain't bad for starters, ~~well folks~~ that was it.

i learned how to cook steaks rare, blood oozing out onto the platter, mushrooms sauteed in butter; baked potaoes with sour cream and butter. tossed salad au gratin with blue cheese

cream caramel came later and i wil give you the secret coutesy of ~~the~~ a local college chef.

i have also learned to waitress and dress in black and white. my towels are usually in the bathroom but if necessary i can wear one on my arm.

i have little patience for snobs or idiots. i have a particular adversion for snobs, they AT LEST USUALLY HAVE GOOD HEALTHwhich allows them to flaunt their ill manners with little concern for their physical well being.

bed ridden and hospitalized are often in a state of hysteria and or shock. for humanitarian reasons i attempt ot assept their lack of social skills

as a nurse and homemaker i have often been required as part of my duties; in training and while working; to both prepare and serve meals to people who cannot feed themselves. how many illusions about humankind have been shattered by outright abuse from the ill, disabled and elderly? patiently fed; mouthful by mouthful those fallen angels seemed an honest way to live my ideals. i have learned to cook and clean in kitchens unfit for human habitation. being shy and insecure it has been a very painful experience.i have rarely been thanked for preparing or feeding for any of those hundreds of hungry.

as a nanny, forget the childhoods of my own children; there were few courtesies extended to me. now, older and wiser; i ~~realize~~ accept them folk can eat their own efforts. i don't need it. i love to socialize over a meal and the loss of that

dream is hard to let go of. i recognize from years of training, experience, t.v. gourmets, and exploration that most people think those of us who think about food and its presentation are somehow lesser beings. bananas are not a household staple; i use them in fresh fruit saladupon rare and very special occasions. sliced into cut apples, grapefruit, oranges, grapes and tossed with cinnamon, lemon juice and maple syrup or honey. that's pretty well it for bananas. that yellow bland waxing moon is the original fast food and surfaces in memory as banana bread of childhood; handles on ceramic plates at the world craft conference and the focus of one hundred years of solitude. but not much as a food choice.

then there's canned tuna. another one of those strange foods that seems to entrance so many of my acquaintances. cheap and nutritious like bananas, it too holds little significance in my regular diet. as a child in the maritimes i ate tuna steaks occasionally. fresh from the sea they were delicious. at the lunenburg fish festival with huge whole tuna mounted on the wall above the smaller creatures. so beautiful; now luring society into a war over which creatures of the marine world are politically correct enough to protect.

there's the ever popular casserole with elbow macaroni, canned tuna, green peas and mushroom soup . put on a crust and bake at 350F for 25 mins. tuna salad with chopped celery and onion mixed with miracle whip. same combo can be put on toast with lettuce. but i don't like dead fish much so rarely eat it.

thereare other foods equally political by way of implication. some ; like apples are laden with guilt via adam and eve while innew york. mom's apple pie made it when kerouac proclaimed its virtues as road food.my father hated apples because they reminded him o f~~the~~ army mess halls and his youth in the depression. i was personally lucky with apples. mom took jack and i to the annapolis valley at blossom time one year and the rolling, mist engulfed valleys of pink frosted trees forever imprinted on my mind left me with a love of the spawn of the gods. apples, truely the fruit of the gods grow almost everywhere. ¶ i don't know how many i've planted but i was told by an old woman that you have to plant them by twos or they won't bear fruit. they are barren from loneliness. many of the old houses i've rented have had apple trees and once i lived in an old farmhouse in an orchard. while I was at Art School the owner had a new house down the road and actively worked the property. what a delight! the apples predominated, accompanied by pears, plums and grapes. ~~what a time it was to~~ we rescued ~~all the~~ freefall and dispersed yet it to fellow students , artists and teachers. dominating the entire property was an ancient walnut tree. possibly the largest tree I've ever seen. met. at the back of that place was a tributary of a larger river and we scooped salmon from its rushingwaters.

this visit

recipe pastry & pie

once while on horseback as a small child the horse broke into a run thru field c̄ scattered apple trees. As the low branch loomed I laid back in the saddle & have ever since been free.

apple sauce c̄ pork apples in butter & cin c̄ curry.

recipes below

apples in coleslaw - Waldorf salad Fiddlehead fried apples c̄ potatoe latkies - Outward Bound cabbage / apples / onions / white wine & Caraway Apple Brown Betty — c̄ pothecks as well

mushrooms

fat white globes of pungent delight from the supermarket.

initially i resisted buying them as i had read somewhere that there was no food value in them. as i became more familiar with foods i gradually introduced them to my own repetoire.

mushroom essay

in innocence i left some of the salmon and fruit for one of the artists in residence. at the art school i was attending she was offended for some reason. i adoredher. she was my ideal, a wood firing potter. what could possibly be wrong withthe cleanest food in the province? i have always wondered - she's dead and i'l never know. whenever i have been given something free i have rejoiced. poverty does that.

i jumped from the politics of apples to the politics of a particular time and place. i thought i was sharing - what could she have thought?

there's the mystique of mushrooms fat white

mushrooms. fat white globes of pungent delight from the supermarket. initially i resisted buying them as i had read somewhere that there was no food value in them. as i became more familiar with foods i gradually introduced them to my own repetoire. the canned variety had come earlier with the chicken livers. fresh into spagetti sauce, stews and fried with burger patties and those rare steaks. salads came next. they went into stuffing for birds and arrived pickled at pot lucks. a never ending rapsody immortalized by the dance of the mushrooms in fantasia. i even had the happy chance to be camping at quetico one fall and through the light drizzle ran a red squirrel; he scampered up to the top of a rock out-cropping and literally danced on his hind legs across the top of the rock holding a wild mushroom over his head. (for that moment) i became entralled by the magic of the wild mushroom.

i have since gone out picking in this northern wood with a family ; two generations of self taught experts. i know two varieties found in this area; both a fleshy pink, gilled; one with a speckle. i fried them in butter with salt and pepper and swooned with pleasure. added to a pilaf they became exotic. the politic seems to relate to magic aspect of certain wild varieties which i have only word of mouth, knowledge of. when scanning the field guies the properties are listed. even as i write there is a facetious comment on t.v. re magic mushrooms. the mexican carlos castenados tales of visual and spiritual discovery related to same are pure enticement to all sorcerers; kitchen and otherwise. the shamanism of most ancient systems all indicate historically rituals that possibly used plants to induce systemized halucinary voyages. these voyages continue, now chemically procured by some and still accepted within certain groups as valid and neccesary components of the spitual experience. the poitics remain a matter of misunderstanding and persecution.

there are pigs and the subsequent culture of rejection and jokes. as a child i delighted when my mother would draw 3 circles within each other add eyes,ears,feet and a squiggly tail and go 'oink, oink, oink'. then the ever endearing "this little pig went to market, this little pig stayed home, this little pig ate roat beef and this little pig ate none; and this little pig went we-we-we all the way home"(done on the toes, starting with largest and ending with the smallest and a tickle that progresses from the foot to the tummy)

once as a child i was visiting with family, a family farm in southern ontario. my great grandmother campbell was still alive and living there. throughout the day we the youngsters rambled about, often unattended. we played in the hay loft and rode on the backs of full grown sheep with fleece 6 inches thick and sopping wet from the rain. each new adventure was treasured. dad teased us because our bottoms got wet from the sheep rides. we walked through the mist to the sugar bush and saw the giant old maples that would give each spring their sweetness. some of them so large we couldn't 2 at a time, put our arms around their trunks. later, left on our own to explore the barn yards we came upon a pig sty. lying there was the biggest pig in the world. and she was actively grunting and heaving. to our juvinile surprise we witnessed the birth of 13 piglets. i can't remember which of us fussed about telling the adults and which of us remained riveted to the scene of creation. the poor maligned pig became at that moment a symbol of life and creation for me. i still eat pork, not often.

there's the pork chop and bacon. bacon cut 1/4 inch thick and fried slowly saving the fat for later use with perogies. there's pork fat or bulk bacon put in small quantities in pork and beans home style. there's tenderoin no longer on my list because of the expense. i now understand the jewish adversion to pork based on long ago health factors related to the fact that pork was often contaminated by little worms; hence salt pork.
swine if you're angry is the name of folk you don't approve of.

but most of all it's pink. pink for rose buds and silk embroidery thread for baby gowns. pink for my hair when lightly hennaed long ago; the blond bits shimmering in my young son's eyes as pink. i didn't attend but heard about a roasted piglet with an apple in its mouth. speaking of piglets i quit my first year of anatomy once when we were told the piglets for dissecting would be arriving the next day. and the story of the three little pigs goes on. i identified with the pigs then, along with an early interest in architecture. that nasty wolf at the door has haunted me to this day. my last encounter with a live pig was on a large farm in the mid-west where i was training as an apprentice potter. now there were pigs - 100's of them .
one of those guys stared me right in the face and glared. stunned me. i suspect a pig's life promotes a considerable amount of paranoia. quite a joke really to get the evil eye from a pig. the most sentimental of my pig stories is a quote from my youngest son, and he said; "i'm a male chauvinist piglet"

my devotion to the dozens of live animals that have lived in dozens of households with me is reflected with my undisciplined attempts to become a vetarian. i prefer not to eat any meat products. the fasting attendant to the bhuddist principle of 'harm no sentient being' follows me daily.
in my naivete i was baffled by the hypocrits claiming to vegetarians while eating fish and fowl. i now recognize the social lies for what they are. i am no longer baffled.
i ignore the trendiness of food fads and look more deeply

into the personal politics of the individuals speaking. i feel it is necessary to understand ~~not only~~ the history of what we eat but the highly indiviualized preferences. i love food as only a child can love his or her mother. food has often replaced the affection i needed from others and was not forthcoming. i get the badly needed strokes with food and food preparation. unfortunately many of those greedy grabby folk that thought i had nothing better to do have been long gone from my day to day existence. i have met chefs and housewives, dishwashers and butchers that give more personally on a grocery shopping expedition than my fellow living companions. food is ~~a way of~~ life , guarded only by those who have nothing else. i admit to refusing to teach certain people how to function in 'my' kitchen. believe me, each cook has a way and to be a part of that one must adhere to the unwritten rules of each and every one. when i was first married and teaching myself how to prepare dinner i was often treated very badly because the food wasn't on the table when (that asshole) came thru the door after work. years later when i had perfected the culinary skills necessary for my personal survival that same guy wanted me me to teach him how to cook. forget it (i'll never teach any of those guys anything critical.)

i now prefer to have dinner either out, often alone. or late. the unplesant atmosphere created by rude , insensitive people

flavours the food as much as the salt. thoughtless choices colour the presentation and destroy the ambience. harsh words burn not only the soul.

cheese, my protein of choice was rejected by my ex. i te
ll this as since expanding other areas of my life cheese has once again become dominant. cheese omelettes are a favorite. grated lited and folded they sustain me. sometimes just a sprinkle of grated parmesan on spagetti, salads, bruschetta; on crusts of casseroles. i even add parmesan to certain soups. a favorite soup is minestrone made with fresh tomatoes. the soup is developed from fresh veggies in a pot of boiling water. gradually add a couple of potatoes, carrots, onions, celery, yellow beans and zuchini. i use spoon sized chunks so as to maintain the hearty peasant style of the soup. the tomatoes are chopped and added with lots of fresh garden herbs. parsley, basil, chives are the best known but majoram or oregano are also great. if the fresh are not available i use the dried. at some point while the pot is simmering i may throw in a cube of condensed stock. the veggie base is best for those trying to fast. leftover navy beans ;soaked and pre-cooked are good and cheap. the cheese can be added while serving or during last stage of cooking. eat when ready with italian bread and herbed butter.

no self respecting north american kitchen witch could talk about cheese without at least an aside regarding the kraft dinner phenomena.

how many thousands of novice cooks have sharpene their knive

check point Jan 27/93

Ketchup

Coleslaw

Recipe crust

on kraft dinner. loaded with many terrible flavourable things it is a bright orange and tangy. also very cheap and filling. the noodles are quick cook. when i ascended to making the real thing,'macaroni and cheese' i was finally on my way. as a child i had refused to enjoy such dishes. i remember being confronted by different folk over the years about my choice of yellow cheese as oppsed to the white. comfort food choices are often sentimental and or related to colour.i didn't even know that 'yellow' was what was used to describe what i call orange. more personal politics --

is that chunk of cheddar on the counter the 'pot of gold' at the end of the rainbow?

more about cheese. blue cheese or danish cheese with its veins of blue rot stinking the frig prompted the use of a cheese tin in the frig.crackers and cheese my snack food par excellence; a descendant of the popular cheese sandwich. is just that. with a difference. i add raw slices of onion, lots of mayo and salt and pepper. to round off the feast there is a thick layer of lettuce. truely a hearty munch. when i stopped making beeferoni and started making vegeroni i added cheese. sometimes parmesan and sometimes whatever else might be available.

Recipe insert

perhaps the most exciting use of cheese i've encountered is the flaming soft cheeses of greece. alcohol is poured over the slab of cheese on a platter and ignited. this wonderful thing is brought to the table flaming to traditional cries. the waiters are always such handsome devils it may be the necessary

ers are always so devilishly handsome that the distracting calls must have been invented to refocus the diners on the food. the cheese saga goes on and on. little miss muffet and her curds and whey became munchies devine. the monks of oka in their fortress produce some of the world's best. wheels and slabs and bricks and hanging in nets. rolled in peppercorns, soaked in wine and mixed with chiies. all the world is more wonderful for cheese.

after reading about a famous restaurant in new york where the rich and famous gathered to eat 'cheesecake' i pondered; what is this treasure that attracts such pretty people? finally discovered many years later i too am now an addict. divine. rarely have i encountered ambrosia by any other name. i have never baked one. i only eat it.

by now as you may have gathered i can get it together for meals. my sons and the many others who have found their way to my table. don't often complain . i hope to never send anyone away hungry. during my impoverished early years of marriage i began a ritual with my children. each evening we placed an extra place at the table for the uninvited guest. the place was often filled in those days of draft dodgers and flower children. there are fewer guests now that i live alone and the underground has moved on but i sometimes long for those times of animated conversation over porcupine balls made with minute rice and cheap hamburger. somehow there was a belief that it would come back to us.

the traditional pot-luck has always been a favorite for large groups. what better way to wine, dine and socialize everyone - altogether now. as a kid my mom would take me off to the country side and we would visit the little country parishes around deloro. we would join the folk for meals chosen from tables laden with the best of the local gardens and barn yards. that's when i began the ties that bind. strawberry socials were the ultimate outing in those few years of country comfort. wandering under the beloved shade trees planted in the church yards , some 100 years old; i developed a love for the quiet gentility of families living in generations old family homes. cool breezes and fluttering butterflies caressed our senses as we waited and danced the gentil dance of sharing the time and the space and the gifts of the ladies kitchens.

of course the buffet at various community centers and halls hosting weddings and benefits are witness to the fun of a good old fashioned pot luck , in variety and spirit at least.

when dearest david was alive and holding court on the main floor of an old apartment house we the residents of the place had many day long feasts. everyone would invite their personal friends/lovers and we all cooked and foraged for donations to the house table. at that time i didn't have an

oven so would often prepare the turkey, stuffed in my studio and then roast the bird at david's. or i would bake pies. they were great times and so many of us were struggling with something be it art, money or merely life in general. the wine flowed and beer was guzzeled. copious quantities of coffee and mineral water were consumed to the competing tunes of up to 5 radios, sterios or tape decks. i guess we eclectic as bolero rolicked from my blaster on the second floor and david's heavy metal clashed with the the soft rock from the student's on the 3rd floor. the air was perfumed with multiples of kitchen, studio and boudoir. we loved each other and were a family that fluxed and expanded with an unending joy of having for those few years a place where we all belonged. we had a birth and a death in that house. that house had life which we all shared.

there were the annual st. pat's parties corn roasts and summer solstices with the food stalls of community cooks. yearly i have celebrated the international women's day with several 100 other local gals.

some of us dress up in our black and white finery and others come in drag. there are pretties and whimsies; hats and high heels. we entertain ourselves with music and dancing and story telling and gossip. we have fun. and we eat togethe
r. baby quiches bean salads and wings. baked goodies and curries.

there is babbling brunette and silky blond. hennaed happy and dramatic silver all tossed and blened with the ritual of good food.

those special feasts often represent the celebration of the harvest. the hunt. after a long summer of digging and hoeing; back defying weeding and then picking we finally get to enjoy/share our rewards. the long soul warming days become filled with the smells of pickling spice and vinegar. huge pots of raspberry jam bubble on the stove top. skim off the foam and eat that first from a little dish the way i did as a child in grandma's summer kitchen at the back of the house on the prairie. beets get parboiled and peeled. the baby beets go in whole and if there are enough of them a special jar of baby beets is set aside for an important day. the others are sliced into the mason jars. over the years i have developed a technique for making those pickled beets. i put the juice boiling hot in on top of the prepared beets. i need so few jars now that it saves time bla bla. mustard pickls are fun when there's lots of cucumbers and onion. cheap, tastes good and so great to look at. they go so fast, i try to make toomuch. grandma's fruit chili is famous in our family. gr. jennie wilellen made it 4 generations ago and one of my sisters and i continue the tradition. gives me something to do with all those jars i seem to collect. i'm always so happy to recieve or capture at a market or fair those wonderful litle jam jars with the raised design in the glass. then i freeze some raspberries if i'm fortunate to get extras and make a blueberry pie. just about everything i need for a feast is ready and how about that its thanksgiving again.

the ultimate truth of any kitchen is the bottom line of staples. having cooked below the poverty line for many years i find an uneasy balance has been struck between those items generally regarded as necessary and those necessary for my heart and soul. soul food isn't just black.
there are the everyday things like flour (which isn't really used that much in my place) sugar(ditto) salt and pepper. bread and butter,peanut butter(cheap protein) and jams going way back to childhood after school snacks. i usually have rice and lentils,raisins for snacks and occasional baking but it's the food for my soul that i think indicates who i really am and dictates the style of my table.
this is where grandma j-w comes in. many good family homes of my childhood had a crabapple tree in the yard . for beauty and utility.each fall we would pick crabs once the first frosts had kissed the little apples red.sorted as to perfection, stems intact. the twins as i caled them were when two or more were attached by their stems. the syrup made from vinegar and sugar with stick cinnamon and cloves. the aroma is 1/2 the thrill. i now have a quicky approach but they are just as wonderful and the childhood delight at those bittersweet memories is preserved again . another year i have maintained the tradition. they sit in my frig in the huge mason jar i save each season. when the mood strikes i pull them out and onto the table they go, in the jar. as an extravagance i have sometimes made pickled peaches. extravagant because i have to buy peaches. they are skinned by dipping in boiling water. sliced round the pit directly

the trees back their purpose. 28.

28.

into the huge mason jar i save from season to season. they live in the frig. my favorite source of apples is a tree i planted years ago in front of my studio. they are a brilliant scarlet and large. more often now i find a source in wanderings thru laneways. so often those old trees are neglected and i feel good about giving them back their purpose. i have rarely made jelly but i'm sure those trees would be happy to give what's needed.

as the politics of food are universal there is no way to say this or that is it. every creature must eat to sustain life. there the food chain is undeniable. we eat - consume to live. fertilizer is food. composting while now trendy wendy is as old as history. kitchens that don't compost aren't really trying.taking is easy.

recycling containers is also a way altho better yet is not buying those plastic bags and the poor man's version of tupper wear. i used to save the yoghurt thingies bla bla bla. finally in a flurry of desperately seeking cupboard space i threw out a plastic garbage bag of assorted shapes and sizes.it used to be easy. i could always find uses when i had kids taking lunches to school and a fully operational studio. now that i work differently there is no use for those bits of garbage. curiously while there is less actual gar-

bage in my household my work still involves the use of materials discarded and scavenged. a higher quality of garbage perhaps. more of that politic later.

once after bringing home a pair of hippy kids on their way west i had a discussion with them about food. there was a pecliar twist to it. i still don't know why they would tell me i could eat dog food but they did. after feeding them i found that very strange. more recently an equally unusual type, more bohemian than dippy made an issue out of dog food and catfood. excuse me but did someone forget to teach these people about realities. every good witch has her/or his familiar. dependant on the requirements of a given circumstance a dog cat or bird may suffice. the attendant rituals are necessary to the survival of the cultural phenomena sustained by that individual . believe it. society will be even less hospitable if we don't protect our personal animals . they are companions of the first order.my animals talk to me. some are funny and playful; others are noisey and clumsy. they all tell me something about where i'm living at the time.the stability of my lifestyle is indicated by my 4 legged barometers. if the yard is situated off the busy thorough fares cars aren't a problem. cats keep the mice out and when there are no mice they will sit in the summer windows and clik at the flies; catching them and eating them. they keep the strays out of the garbage in their struggle for territory. wild birds nest in the surrounding trees and the cats suppliment their commercial feed with the chase and capture . but as a noted veterinarian stated these little beasts, domesticated for 4000 years are by nature predators. to keep them healthy and cohesive for the entire animal bring their

keep them healthy and contributing their diet has to be monitored. as with all the animal kingdom lean and mean is best.anticipation creates an atmosphere of generosity of spirit. when the beasties are hungry or simply because there is activity in the food center of the home they become 'animated'.

the chorus of their excitement thrills the air.

one of my birds, a cockatiel, became a boozer while stealing scraps of food from our plates at table. he would hop skip and jump from corn niblets to lettuce. he was actually a carnivor and loved chicken. most favoured of all though were the many sips of wine he scoffed. sitting on the edge of a particularily large glass one day he fell in. i pulled him out by his tail feathers; spluttering and hissing at once. it was a wonderful laugh and 'kimmie' endeared hinself over and over with his antics. a sure trick to get him back in his cage was to offer him fresh iceberg lettuce. he loved it. sunflower seeds went out of their dish onto the floor but whole heads dried complete and placed on the floor of his penthouse were attacked with vigor.

he was eventually sold to a breeder as a stud. the cats had re-entered the household and were unable to restrain their interest in his presence.

there are almost always a row of dishes on the floor of counter. under the standup wood stove or in a little traveled corner.

i'm going to take a break and rummage thru the frig for a meal.

on to the fact I was trained and practised as a studio potter for 15 years. the study is ongoing as is the practice which encompasses all aspects of daily living.

potting is or was my 'rice bowl', my way. if thought about we are immediately aware of the connection between potting and eating. i have never known a potter who didn't like to eat we are all good cooks; taking with us throughout the day our guardian shop of the fire. the more involved a person becomes with the pure form of their medium the closer they become their medium. the kitchens of fledglings house the seconds and the rare piece we can't sell because it marks a discovery. a new glaze, a lick of the flame, a form so sweet it sings.

from banding wheel to lazy susan the bond is complete. the soil of the garden is the clay on the wheel. recycling seconds and broken crockery continue the cycle.

recipes abound in both sometimes extending to higher math as the calculations search for the perfect measures and temperatures. organic - inorganic ; the total expression of independence from man and harmony with nature.

so often i've been asked did you make that? and so often i have had to say no. most of my work was sold as i lived the dream life of a potter in the twentieth century.

I hope to open the cupboard & decide what mug I will drink my coffee from today. (It's a way of keeping in touch with my soul.

my children broke a lot of my pieces as children do. i made a castle from stonewear with 3 turrets and domes a la orient fired and placed on the piano for show with little candles set inside to light the windows and doors. curiosity betrayed them and it was broken several times and finally relegated to the midden. the hundreds of mugs and jugs, platters plates and bowls thrown on my wheel are nearly all gone. the teapots, some still holding flowers because of broken lids or spouts that dripped appear occasionally in the myriad of locations about town. i have left a trail, a trail of the pieces of my life i could no longer carry as i bounced from place to place. running from poverty, whether it be the poverty of the dollar or abuse.

other gardeners, other cooks and other potters have peopled my life. none of its been easy. always on the edge of losing something and going hungry in spite of the honesty of those endeavors. harry davis pointed out that the industrial revolution changed more than the approach to production. changed too was the community of interdependence which operated on the premise that each member of the group preformed a task critical to the survival of the group. with mass production of food and pots we lost our independence from the dollar. now our hands lie idle in front of the t.v. and our favorite meals come in a can. Since that one romantic trip to a restaurant i have carried the responsility of providing meals to a community of family and friends.

who seldom recognize i need to have clothes and transportation as well. = the loss of my pottery so went my livelihood. But there still lots of food to share.

perhaps i should revert to the amish way and travel to market by horse from a self sufficient homestead. i got close. as the vultures descended upon my little place in the world i tried feeding away their grasping hunger. cooking took on new meaning. the garden became an obsession as i tried to feed us on a budget fixed well below tolerable levels.shit was worked in and weeds cultivated as greens. nasturiums long a pretty favorite flavored salds and the mint along back lane became tea. seeds were gathered from ditches and garden escapees. names were memorized to provide fodder for thought as my mind descended into the despair of abandonment. i used to crack ice in a towel on the floor and then i began to fall through the cracks looming large. rarely did anyone offer assistance. someone gave me a dozen brown eggs once. occasionally a piece of game. parties and meals seem to happen but the intimacy i crave doesn't happen ; so i continue to lok for a way that works. there are countlessneeds unmet in spite of years of research into the psychology of our time. the missing ingrdiant lies with me and i don't know where to look any more. its not in cupboard of old mother hubbard. as in days long gone i must once again begin again. there is no going back to an innocence forgotten. there is only a going forward to the unknown. the pottery is gone with few reminders of that effort around me now. i live alone so cooking is not a significant activity anymore.

the retreat into self sufficiency is more or less complete. it is a peculiar sufficiency. i write as compulsively as i once gardened or potted. desperate to find the key. desperate to live and dying alone a little more each day. with a high i.q. rating i should have been able to figure some of it out. but here i sit; sit. crafts have provided me with a non violent life style which is good. it has also allowed me to develop skills that could make me secure , my self esteem high. not. i have become the totally dependant non-contributing persona. i am socially disabled, financially challenged in the extreme and presently drag a leg broken in two places. it takes a network of professionals to keep me alive from day to day.i live in fear that those eyes glaring with rage will zero in on me again. that i will fall thru time and space to another world i cannot understand. the anxiety of wondering when i'll be blasted again has gone. the resulting tension has numbed me to the daily grind. never a choice, always necessity and compromise.

as i make another cup of coffee and roll another cigarette i muse that perhaps i could do a few paragraphs on the coffee cult. the mystique of that tantilizing aroma as it lifts through the house. the progression from instant to espresso and subsequent capucino.

i began drinking coffee with the kids i worked with in toronto at the golden mile. we'd go for break and that was it. mom usually had a pot on so i'd have it again at home. on dates and expeditions with friends we'd go in somewhere to ~~sit down and have a smoke~~ and a coffee. perhaps it was

sit - and light up. perhaps it was cool. it was definitely cheap.

the ritual of a morning coffee remains with me. i went through the electric percolator phase in the early years of my marriage. the stove top percolators ever replacing the broken parts of glass. filter coffee of the north became melitta of the sophisticated south. then i discovered cap-ucino. like sex i can't remember the first time. tried turk-ish and cafe au lait in their time and place. mexico was interesting as the country exports coffee yet only instant is readily available. served in tall glasses with milk.

the italians remain the experts vis a vis coffee in my experience however. the treasured espresso machines around which businesses are still built are so beatiful. their chrome and coper and brass fittings polished to reflect the the ever changing distortions of their clientel.
the hissing of the milk as it is steam scalded and foamed fills the air with expectation. finally the sprinkle of chocolate ;or cinnamon is dealt with finess and you have a cup of coffee. the ritual has extended itself. from a spoonful of dark brown odourless granules to a production that entreats and enjoins bohemia. the addition is complete.

an obvious occurs when consumption is cut. sleep happens without the restlessness. i smoke fewer cigarettes. and i eat more.

Feb 7/93 misread
upto pg 36.

and then there's gardening.

it all began one hot northern prairie day. i looked out the basement apt. window on the backyard and saw my young land lady actively moving about with some determination. inquisitive and bored i watched. being fully pregnant and new in town i was longing for companionship and diversion. she stayed there a longish time so i ventured out. i was very shy and uncertain how to approach this woman who owned a house, had a hearty husband and child and played in her backyard. she was making a garden and seemed to really know what she was doing. how i ever managed to ask for a little corner in that space i'll never know but i did and so began my life as a gardener.i'll never forget maureen with her ukranian name and white sheets. i learned a lot from her and others like her during those lonely days as not only a new wife but soon to be mother and social incompetent. how painful it was asking all those questions and how glad i am i asked.

that little garden of my own was perhaps 10 feet square. buying seeds and little plants was so sweet. to see how many things there were to put to play with was joy - pure joy for my hungry heart. i could actually have these lovely flowers , red tomatoes, carrots and lettuce for my very own self. an embarrassment of riches for certain.

that patch kept me alive in that desert of knowing no one. i waddled about that corner in my toxic water laden 21st year exaulting in the freedom. knowing virtually nothing i was able to innovate. when the tomatoe plants reached up to the suni staked them with chop sticks. i watered each little row and plant; pansies and all ; with my tea-pot being intimidated by the hose. i had a reason to get up in the morning and i had a reson to go outside. i had a life at last. on the rare occasions i met one of the owners out there in that paradise i would question and receive. i began composting.

my young inexperienced husband with a full time job became a farm hand on weekends. driving tractors and plows through that dust filled plain; the rows becoming straighter and prouder each day out. the women of that huge complex of farms would put out fantastic spreads for the guys and i would be told in great detail the wonders to behold. 6 pies, a turkey and a ham; vegetables and salads unending. mostly his stories made me hungry as i hadn't eaten a decent meal for close to a year.eventually he was persuaded to fetch me for a tour of the place and an evening meal. i was overwhelmed by the wealth. these people were all connected to our landlady by birth and marriage. all very interesting to a nomad. occasionally he would come home late into the bright evening. totally unrecognizeable so covered with dirt. it was a terrible shock to not know him when i saw him.

the neighbour lady befriended me and her husband my husband. i had a friend. she was a short stocky woman with a thick accent. they were also ukranian. now they had a garden. the summer kitchen was in their basement with a big old wood stove. there she canned and pickled. i was introduced to fresh herbs from the garden. dill, growing 4 feet tall for dill pickles imagine. caraway seed and garlic. i truly was amazed.

xmas arrived and i saw and tasted for the first time cabbage rolls and perogies with sour cream. i was such an innocent abroad its only now so many of these memories make sense. that poor guy trying to make sense of my emaciated body, nightmares and agony of depression already crippling me.

during the time in the middle north of alberta i saw the last of the hand stooked grains and worked as an egg candler.

the lady next door told me about the job and off i went secure my child was safe with a motherly older gal. and he was. we both cried the first day i went to work but he was a happy little fellow and soon adjusted to this kindly nanny. i was trained to sit in a pitch black cubicle and stare at the hundreds of eggs rolling by. the eggs were sorted by size number of yolks and internal flaws. it was great fun to make good money and discover the fun of being with such energetic women who actually laughed and babbled in many tongues as they worked. we hoisted crates and shot them along rollers to the cooler. i became the office clerk taking in the fresh eggs from district farmers and running simple books on the flow of trade. the operation included a chicken

barn which housed countless white birds in cages stacked to the roof dropping their pearly treasures into wire baskets. it frightened me to see that production line. i saw the baby chicks arrive in their flats and remembered the pecking order experiment at school. i was troubled but said little. the owner, a beautiful silver haired very grand dame. invited me to house for tea breaks a couple of times . she had a lovely old farmhouse with bay windows with seats in them; filled with pillows covered with elaborate patterns which she made.big fat silky cats sat on sills and ancient ferns hung in the shadows. i was impressed by the comfort and vaguely remember that she was trying to somehow help me understand the world which i guess i had already indicated was too much for me.

dear auntie margaret came to visit and i served a steak.what a strange experience. i had bought one very large steak and then when it was cooked i cut it into 3 pieces. that industrious young husband went crazy. i had given myself the smallest but choicest bit - the tenderloin. I claim not knowing but perhaps i could see even then the difference. i learned.

i spent days preparing dried fruit and nuts for the traditional fruit cake and carrot pudding. i fastidiously cut and buttered miles of brown paper from bags. they cooked forever and i was up another night. when the operation was complete i had something like 15 lbs. of the richest xmas cake in the world. the pudding a depression favorite replaces plum and i sentimentally prefer it to the more profane.

a small ton of ripe tomatoes entered my life and with some direction, verbal, from women in the town; i began my career as a canner. what an ordeal! religiously i sterilized mason jars and lids. peeling tomatoes by dipping them in boiling water with an x cut in their plump bottoms. jars were filled and placed in the big canning pot. another sleepless night as i endured the tradition of housewifery. i faithfully placed them on a shelf in the pantry and admired my efforts.

my use of tomatoes was going to get an upturn. the first jar i opened was sizzling. i smelled them and tasted them. and i threw them out. then i threw all the other jars out. i haven't canned tomatoes since.who knows what happened. a glitch.

the big success was heavenly marmalade. it is heavenly with many sweet fresh fruits chopped and boiled. little bits of marichino cherry added for the extravagance of colour. such a reward and now only made if i'm madly in love and rich at the same time.

we ate many wild ducks and geese in those early days of confusion. x was an accomplished shot and came home from the sloughs in the fields with many dead birds. after joining him on one of those expeditions i went into a fury and forbid future such slaughters.dead ducks squawking and burrowing into the swampy mire to escape drove me to hysteria. i am adament to this day.another clash of cultures which ate at the heart of his lifes' experience and my lifes' isolation and oh too gentle sensibilities. We were omnivorous & I strained to be free of that guilt.

Friends from mill asked for one & they hung in the European tradition to get high in their garage. Another bit of sophistication.

my beautiful new son filled my consciousness. the first
i had had none of the predicted cravings for dill pickles
and ice cream.but during those long nights of being awake on
demand to feed that little parasite hooked me into a lifelong
habit of nursing a cup of coffee as i sat bottling him.
my doctor stated i couldn't nurse him. i now know that was
his trendy for the time approach to taking that bonding
critical experience from both of us. we emptied a lot of
little bottles of baby food and i mashed a plantation of
bananas.making formula in the middle of the night ; heating
them in water on the stove and worrying myself about hygiene
became a way of life.that $49 kitchen table and chairs of
fake chrome and beige flecked plastic became the focus of
much activity.i had a corner in the world.

chris was fed there and bathed there and burped there.when
he nodded off to sleep i would hold him cradled in my left
arm, drink coffee and write letters. i described my life
in infinite detail. i suspect i asked questions about the
food and baby care. i still had a 23 inch waist and dreams
of travelling to far away places. dreaming rocking and writin
g at that table in the night below ground level.

there was kerouac , steinbeck, o'hara feeding the road and
sex; colouring my world purple. portia my black cat dozed and
purred with chris as the quality of mercy nurtured my hope
of freedom as a woman with a prestigious job, non labour.

those wonderful country pot lucks were remembered and as i searched through store shelves for things to eat i discovered navy beans with a recipe on the back for 17¢. then went hunting for a bean pot. the recipe is used to this day and i made many of those pots on my wheel. cheap nutrious and yummy i was onaother tangent in the kitchen.

about the same time i got a small bottle of vinegar. a similar bottle has graced my cupboard until recently when i began tranferring the vinegar into glass wine bottles and adding branches of sage from the garden.i began to notice the knives used by butchers and asked a lot of questions. i learned how to sharpen them with a wet stone.

in the spring i would walk chris in his buggy. i was persuaded to meet the young couple across the street as they had a young son as well. ellen and coffed back and forth and i admired her garden and her pie crust. she gave me the recipe and i use it still. light and flakey no fail from her farm girl history. passed it on eventually to my own mother who swears by it.butter tarts and pies became regulars. the left over bits of pastry were rolled out , spread with butter sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon and raisins; then rolled jelly roll style and cut into inch wide bits and put in the oven along with whatever i was really making. i got to eat those myself. a treat just for me and later for the kids.

it was a relief to not cook pies for 5 hours and have to eat tough rubbery pastry which is how it all started. the first 2 pumpkin pies were the precursors of some simple fame in the pastry department.

a quarter of a century of parties began.we would invite fellow workers, neighbours and strays. plates of cold cuts and cheese with pikles and olives came out. crackers and cocktail breads, and beer and rye whiskey kept the tongues wagging and the spirits high. we all wondered if it was okay or cool. fortunately my parents had entertained a lot so i had a few clues and x's parents had been high rollers in the hunt and fish crowd. dad's friends blew their horns and x's dad hired flat cars to party to the northland hunt of deer and migrating birds.cocktail dresses and suits mingled with genes and flannel shirts.nothing like a good lively gang to babble the cold winter away.bonspiels maintained the at mosphere of fun and camaradie.

household plants and kittens joined the menagerie and we moved to the country. the cows from down the road munched in the front yard and pheasants gravelled in the driveway. portia piled her nightly catch of field mice at the back door to help stock the larder. i had sweetpeas in gay profusion and a corn patch sadly neglected. one of guys from mill came for a bonfire party and stayed all wekend drinking my home made sake . it was vile tasting stuff i had breed in a crock under sink. he drank most of it.

x was agitating to return to ontario and my dad obliged. my hopes of going on to west coast closeted in my dream world.

wait for me australia; wait for me world.

the vinegar was added to mayonaise(miracle whip) to make a a tart dressing for coleslaw.
i added chopped apples and celery, onion and walnuts and so evolved my stlye of waldorf salad. it was a mainstay. mom had made something similar .

we went to anitalian restaurant with paintings by local artists on the walls. we were told they were payment for meals. i had a friend from new york who knew how to make spagetti sauce so was shown how to do that. the teaspoon of sugar was a special touch. acquiring the herbs and spices was an event.another staple discovered and maintained.meatballs were a time consuming act of culinary art. dinner was often pasta.

the day of moving to ontario arrived and with it the movers. i walked out the door and never looked back. my little cottage in the prairie behind me. everything arrived in balmertown intact including the coffee grounds in the coffee pot. the transition was slow. chris and i flew in later when a house was available.another outpost of civilization to be explored.

we arrived by a small plane from winnepeg mid winter . it was 30 below and i'd never heard of square tires before. the first thing i remember seeing in my new home was a gigantic black bird chasing a little spanial down the road to the mine.

we had gone from a nickle refinery to a gold minex was now a gold assayer instead of a lab teck. i was surrounded by a deeply embedded culture of hard talking hard drinking northerners. there was much competion amonst the women and i was without virtue in such a milleux. i wedged bread dough and sugared deep fried donuts. many parties and a growing respect for the wilderness emerged as a reaction to the violence of killing wildlife. one of neighbours shot a bear in back yard and brought me the head in a cardboard box. being the new kid in town they were checking my credentials for survival in their territory. i didn't want to stay and now i was lobbying to move.

i brought some food ideas back to the real world. there is south african curry withchunks of lamb or beef.
a young wife made wonderful ribs and rice. so i didn't starve physically, only in my heart. my isolation from any meaningful contact seemed complete. my youngest son was born thereand he was a healthy joyful little guy. chris was impressed with his new brother but i knew we had to go.

once again as would become a pattern, we sorted and sold our things , moving only the important or difficult to replace. there was much preparation. x took courses by corespondence to qualify foradult status at the university. lakehead accepted him and he scouted ahead for housing. we came to lakehead as we couldn't afford to any further with our old car, small bank account and two small children.

we had no role models only hope.

it was all a blank. our apt. was the main floor of a house with turrets looking over the lake. we wore our coats in the kitchen during that winter.as always i worked at whatever. the first babysitter fed the kids marishino cherries for dessert one noon. i began shopping for groceries at a popular supermarketnot far from where we lived. the meat counters still nauseatedme and x was required to think about such things altho i was definitely tied to the stove. perhaps that's the option we women get. would i have fared better tied to the bed.

junk food became more accessible with my new sophisticated friends from academia. more parties and new foods. the wine and cheese soirees began.

i bought a guitar and began taking lessons. it was long in coming as my mother had some adversion to guitars. the twang of country music appealed to my youthful senses and now the folk songs of the new order were urging me forward. wrapped in my old winter coat i would practice in the kitchen on those lonely nites. x was often at u or a part time job so the kids and i would romp . when i got tired of attempting cords i would start banging on strings and thumping on , we would improvise , laugh and sing old tunes i knew from long ago. 'hey joe' , 'let me go lover', 'don't let the stars get in your eyes' etc, etc. with the washer or dryer on the go we had full accompaniment.

my trusty radio given me by an old boyfriend for my 19th birthday was in the kitchen and kept me company. i carried that portable with me until x finally dropped it so many times it was useless.i listened to the balladeers and longed for freedom. not freedom from my kids but from some hidden nagging doubt and fears i couldn't name. From loneliness

i continued to feed my family and it was mainly ameat and potatoes menu. diversity was granted with minimal exploration with rice and pastas. stews were a regular as was a liver, cream corn combo. i had found the frozen chicken livers in supermarket and made the old favorite of dad's on toast. depression was overwhelming me by this point. the kids and and i were lift to our own resources and when x dissappeared to the bush for a summer job with the ministry i headed east with the kids in my uncles car when he arrived unexpectedly. we had had no money from x and i couldn't keep it together alone. i g ot a job with the beach program in cobalt. we spent the summer waiting for contribution from x and i naively continued to think he would send money to help out. i also expected him to show up for a planned trip with friends to expo in montreal at the end of the season.

we ate on the lawn looking out over the river. there were lots of picnics and bar-b-q's. finally i got a postcard saying he wasn't coming just days before he was to have arrived. that was the 'straw that broke the camel's back'. my folks

were away so i walked to town with the kids, 4 miles.

48.

once in cobalt i left the kids with georgie, my summer time friend from the beach. she had half a dozen kids and a consumptive husband. georgie was full of enthusiasm and energy. her kids were happy and tattered so it was a perfect choice for us to land as escapees. then i bummed a ride to toronto with a gal who was running away from her husband. in toronto i called a friend who was to have been part of the expedition to expo .he was delighted to know that at least i was still following plan one. he sold his trumpet for $25 and we were off.i was finally out of the kitchen.

we hitched amid the exodus from toronto. we laughed and got a ride with a dour frenchman. i drove most of the way and what a time getting into montreal. dipping and diving thru those wild and crazy francophones. we hit downtown in daylight and watched all the pretty people in the streets. the women are so alive with their own sensuality and memories of my school days there flooded back.

after many phone calls we located a place to stay with friends of my mother.i had arrived and the sense of goodwill was exhilarating. we spent all our days and nites on the expo site. the french pavillion was filled with art treasures and i was propositioned by an older type lesbian.

with our limited funds we enjoyed the free exhibits and ate foods from all over the world. the smells and tastes exotic. glenn danced great leaping imitations of nuriev on the subway platform and police eyed us suspiciously. we bought a beer

for a g.i. heading to vietnam. we roamed the midway and watched fireworks.

then we got thrown out on the street at the place we were staying. the guy was having a hard time and his wife explained it was just one of those things. so our last nite was spent trying to doze in the bus depot with dozens of other homeless. eventually after drinking all the coffee we could stand we headed out into the streets again.

our gear was stashed at the train station so we had to wait . we sillied the night away.

just before leaving the downtown i saw a dress in a boutique window that i had to have. it was pinks and purples. a knit t-shirt. in we went in our dirty cut-offs and i spent our last real money on that little number. we hopped on a subway and headed west. at the end of the line with overpasses in view we began to walk. and we walked. exhausted from dodging traffic we finally hitched a ride which took us most of the way to north bay where we separated.me going north to collect my kids and face the music.

with 13¢ in my pocket i arrived at my parents to be greeted warmly by my mother. georgie had called and everything was okay. my adventure had ended well.

chris , sean and i headed home - ?not sure to what.

the apt. had been emptied and my stuff stashed in a shed. x was there with excuses and a new apt. the nightmare continued. my old job was gone and so was any expectation x might start behaving in a responsible way towards us. after many battles i left him with kids and all the household feeling somehow that financially he was more capable, which was true.

the next two years were desperate. stilltrying to find a way to earn a living i did many things. at one point i did some typing for a local underground newspaper and was treated with such disdain by the leading lights of the operation that i turned my interests elsewear.eventually i hitched to nova scotia;went part way with a younger sister. i shared an apt. with her and found a job.

the boyfriend of note was a dental student of some fame. he did my teeth at the clinic and we became lovers. as the star of the faculty he managed to give me some status on campus . i made history as the best secretary in the faculty. he fed me as the low wages and the escalating costs of living alone left me with little to eat. we would go to the cafeteria of his residence and he would load up his tray. when alone i cooked on a hotplate. he made a hungarian stew with paprika sausage and a potatoe casserole dish.

the same sister got married while i was in halifax and i as family organized much of the reception. a church group made the food and we served it buffet style in our apt., the halls and the big front room of some kids on the main floor. i made the dreeses from velveteen. hers a floor length white with silver trim. silver because of dad's silver refinery. mine, as maid of honour, was pink floor length with trailing fushia ribbons. it was a grand event with tuxes and roisterous sailors. our family arrived for the event and with such a crowd we had a party that spilled into the streets some of went dancing later.

when i could no longer bear being away from my kids i negotiated with x to give it a nother shot. i got on a train and headed west once more. they were there to meet my train on a blustery st. pat's day. when i saw those two little guys running towards me i knew i had made the right decision.i vowed to make it work.

the next place was a main floor looking out over the 4 hills, with the lake and giant beyond.the kids and i developed a fantasy world . when they worried that the giant might get hungry out there all alone i reassured them that at night he awoke and came inland to eat the hamburgers on the hamburger tree that grew in the back yard. those were the days of the univited guest: another charlie. this charlie slept in a little cubicle in the basement and owned the house. he was rarely in town but eventually married an energetic woman who helped me learn more about gardens. from her i come the calendula or pot marigold which i grow whenever i have a garden. row after row of many varieties of lettuce and the beloved italian broccoli with its little crowns of yellow.why i chose to put white petunias in the bit of garden in front of the house i don't know but they bloomed in profusion in that afternoon sun spot. my gourds climbed the side wall quite neatly but produced no fruit. they did however attract the attention of the little old lady across the street and she came over to look at them and we became friends. she eventually offered to sell me her big old house . it didn't happen but i did become the owner of a brass bed and many memories of her home and garden.

i had begun to learn how to throw on the potter's wheel while in halifax at the n.s. sch. of art. with my return to t.b. i reconnected with some of my clay connections and began to work at the fledgling u. pottery.i'll never know why i love clay and the resulting pots. perhaps the sensuality, the forgiving nature, the endless possibilities. as a kid in t.o. i had seen wheel thrown work in a window in the old village and to this day consider that the beginning of my true interest. also by this time i had begun to see wonderful pots in peoples homes and the potters i had met were always interesting attractive beings with gentle ways.

there was a fascination with the colours of the glazes and the excitement of the fire. i had a whole life revolving around the 3 critical activities ; the gardening , the kitchen and the pottery. This was my home & my children.

we wandered the roads of living well below the poverty line. something i had no training for. but we endured. pushing our old car to jump start it in the snow. once when i was making a tomatoe based meal in the pressure cooker it blew up. we all ran for cover leaving chris on the counter. once back in the kitchen , with chris intact and laughing at all the commotion the task of scrapping the tomatoe off the ciling began.

in our walks thru the 4 hills and along the creek below we noticed an abandoned house on the edge of the creek.

i tracked down the owner and moved us in.gardening became a passion as we cleared the long neglected yard. in an attempt to spring clean the weeds and long grasses i set fire to the 4 hills. the fire department was most co-operative and the guys laughed at my distress. the raspberries appreciated the partial freedom and we had a bumper crop. the pumpkins twisted their vines around the corn as i carefully pollinated their flowers with a tiny brush. our scarecrow was pointed at and delighted over by all the kids who walked along the path below there were picnics and bar-b-q's . we hosted toboggan parties on the hills behind the house and it seemed idyllic.

at this stage we began to spend summers at lake nipigon. we rented a little cabin initially and had a big woods tent for the kids to sleep in. long walks to pick blueberries which became jam and pies. fresh fish showed up regularily and weinny roasts on the beach.

throughout i was plagued with fears and doubts. nothing specific - always obscure. on rainy days we made whole grain breads and tie died everything in sight. the kids would rush to the waves on the shore and rinse out the excess dyes. brightly cloured waves would churn onto the sand and still all seemed well.

there were many from the states who came into our range of socializing. their political influence was curious. the peace marches and rallies begun then for me continue to this day when the time and ideas pull me together. feminism as a politic also expanded my horizons, although i never doubted my intellectual rights only the emotional strength to survive. i still read extensively and germaine greer was talking my

i taught pottery and developed a desire to fill my cupboards with beautiful pots. to set my table of garden fresh foods served in bowls i had made myself.electric kilns did not interest me but served as a learning compromise. the kids got into mucking about and made funky little things. we had wood fired raku sessions firing in kilns i built using salvaged fire brick from the old tunnel kilns at rosylyn.
brick by brick i worked them loose and brick by brick the kids and i stacked them. those same bricks were recycled 6 times. with each new kiln they were carried and course after course led to their purpose of teaching and firing new work. some of them were even used to build a "yellow brick road" path from the back door to the lane of our house on dufferin.

i painted a discarded round oak table which was pitted with rot, a bright fire engine red. chairs gathered around the city second hand stores for
$5 each were painted every colour under the sun to liven our meals. x rarely spoke to me by this point and i thought it was perhaps his taciturn nature mixed with hard work.
he was rarely home and then he would eat and sit at his desk until books and papers were dealt with. often he would spend a little time with kids or watch t.v. silently.as i am not much interested in running about there became evident a death of community. my efforts to learn my trade of pottery was scorned .because of my connection to many odd folk there were still a few parties.

i disliked the incestuous gossip and manuvering of the u. and ultimately left the place forever i hoped.

my first trip to mexicocommenced . off i went in an old car with a woman who was an experienced traveller and was planning to rescue a lover from the perils of bandidos and tequilla. the food was great with eggs and tomatoe sauce which i now know to have been salsa. fresh breads, many beans and lots of rice.i discovered fresh squeezed orange juice on a jaunt to the huge and famous archeological museum one day. it was a wonderful awakening for me as i drank the artifacts of aztex and mayan cultures . tiny humming birds perched on the rims of tiny exquisite bowls and endless ~~anthropological~~ antropomorphic creatures which must have graced the alters and funerary rooms of the frightfully powerful dead omnipotent living gods. corn on street corners cooked in the husks reminded me of the rolling fields with straw hatted pesanos tending the miles of corn stalks.

there were fence posts along the road side that had come alive as trees in the hot humidity. everywhere i looked were beautiful dark skinned people with colourful hand woven clothes and in the markets pots to cook over open fire with.

we picked up a french woman travelling in the same circles we had encountered and headed south , off the beaten track to hit the small towns and markets. the adobe and cobblestone draped courtyards with bourgainvillia made me estatic that finally i was beginning to really see the world. then going down a winding country road we were sideswiped by a truck heading up into the mountains. all the glass was shattered

and the inside doors and fenders wrecked. the driver didn't stop and when we began to recover from the shock and realized there was no blood or broken bones we continued our broken way down the road to the first village in the valley below.

it was siesta time and we had to wait several hours to get police attention. the locals in turn called the federales. off we were taken to be set beside a tower on the turnpike with an armed guard standing beside our demolished vehicle. as 3 foreign women from 3 different countries we were left in the hot sun to be pondered. eventually a handsome young officer arrived and transferred us to his big black machine. we were joined by an older guy who was it turned out, the district chief. we were driven to some far away mountain village in the dark of night.once stopped the young guy banged on the door of a canteena and made the owners get out of bed to feed us. we were feasted courtesy of the local chief and it was a awakening for me. the women were served chicken and men had steak. my request for steak was ignored. at one point as i sat silently wondering what our fates were to be the chief stuck his finger in my face and announced ' this one thinks too much'.

eventually we were returned to the car and sent off to the next place which turned out to be pueblo. we spent the nite in a place all in one room for $2 each. the car business was arranged and we located the bus terminal to return to mexico city.

i ate slices of fresh cut pineapple and mango on a stick as we waited in that bustling city. by now my nerves were shot

so once in the Mexico city i sat in the hilton lounge listening to a a water fall and sipping something cool and sweet. a sugar exec from puerto rico offered to wine and dine me for a few days but i could no longer tolerate the unpredictable success of my first adventure abroad and got on a bus to canada. the aisle was packed on our departure and after a fuss about my passport and pack at the border all went well . i think i was awake the whole way. when i got off the 3½ hour bus in port arthur there was no one else left on the bus.

i had bought an ugly house in the country. it was a compromise because it had none of the features i wanted but it tied up my money so it couldn't dissapear into the family coffers. the cat chased rabbits in the back yard and there were a few birds and squirrels about. the sandy soil was not productive but we attempted a potatoe patch in the field beyond our evergreens. the kids spent most of their days on a school bus or at school. i put together my electric kiln and hand built a fantasy world . chris got his arm caught in the wringer washer and after a year of torture and renovations we moved to town again. i had found my dream house one dark winter night and bought it because it felt like a home and had a nice siloette in the night.

~~as it was discovered~~ the house was a turn of the century french country style. the mansard roof with gabled windows enfolded the second storey. there was even a widow's watch looking out over the lake and we often would stand there and pretend we were watching for the 'captain' to sail into the harbour below.i was in heaven and the kids were delightedwith their rooms and the cavernous stone built basement.the brick walls and old porches were perfect. as spring emerged that yearhundreds of tulips welcomed us to the garden.

the garden had been well tended for the 40 years of the previous owner. purely organic with none of the hype. healthy raspberry canes divided the garden in two. there were black currents bushes and mint. many perennial flowers which i had to learn the names of and a few i knew. when i realized what i had i went to the library and began to study, a study that continues to this day.

with the first sign of mildew on the newly named and fragrant phlox i realized my first major transplant. they went into the sun near the 25 year old peony bushes. then i planted gloriosa and for years was rewarded with enough blooms of brilliant oranges and rusts. there was a monster baby's breath so i could now hang great bunches of it in the pantry - a real pantry - to dry and adorn the house during winter.there was fresh mint tea leading to an interest in other tisanes. from dawn to dusk i lived in the gardeen and ran to the kitchen only to answer the phone or feed the kids. i was happy.

that spring the window sills were filled with pots and flats of tomatoes started from seed and everything else from pansies to cabbage. the kids were not enthusiasts but chris transplanted a dying geranium and while it never flowered it grew healthy varigated foliage. sean dug great holes in the lawnand built a tree fort in the monster in the front yard. the wagon they had used to wander the streets or yor selling bunches of rhubarb became a down hill vehicle that ultimately crashed at bottom of hill. there were lemonade stands on the side walk and bicycles everywhere.

the rows were planted at angles to confuse the predatores and companion planting implemented. the front edge became a flower bed growing each year. there were marigolds and pussy cats everywhere.having added manure i was treated to sunflowers 7 feet tall. the indian corn from seed acquired in the states wasequally tall with pumpkins twining up the stalks. every where there were lady bugs and butterflies. we were even graced with humming birds.

i had never grown brussel sprouts before and was amazed that the seeds i had started indoors in spring produced long after frost had begun. tomatoes in great profusion gave forth such an excess that many were wrapped in newspaper and stored in the old wine cellar.i threw soapy water on the rose bushesto eliminate the aphids and watched each red poppie bloom as their self seeded loviliness arrived. initially as the pale green sprouts surfaced they wre weeded out . i relized this was something not like the weeds i knew and the garden was soon spotted with their towering heads.

in spite of the idyllc appearance of things i was in a much more severe state of impending collapse than even i realized the constant activity which included tearing off to pottery workshops when i wasn't hosting one at the u plus the house demands, kids and garden. i weighed 105 lbs. and slept rarely. when i wasn't working to maintain the family lifestyle i was reading, writing or sketching at the kitchen table.

i made granola regularily and tried to convince the kids yoghurt was good for them. there were veggie stews and multi grain loaves and muffins. we had raspberry tiger's milk and made jam. rhubarb chutney and crisp were favorites.

my studio was in the basement and often i would plug away down there trying new ideas. once i even did a reduction firing with my electric kiln. i fed slivers of cedar shakes through one of the spy ports with subsequent smoke which drove us outside. the firing was successful as there were wonderful flashes of moderate reduction on the pots. obviously i was attempting to be super mom.

i lived in constant pain of inadequacy and tried desperately to be good at something.

the arrogance of the reverd harry davis , potter xtraordinaire left me humiliated and searching for buried perfection in myself. it has been a long struggle to the understanding that snobs are sometimes also skilled. fortunately for humanity there are also many talented folk who are kind thoughtful and happy to share their knowledge. upon meeting a famous and innovative glass blower who taught me without a word what grace is.....

i can only imagine that in every mother's life there is at least on cookie monster.my mother made a wide variety of regular fare and party specials. peanut butter is still one of my favorites. i acquired many of those old recipes and the cheese moons are wonderful. marmalade is dropped by the teaspoonful into round or cheese pastry. then its folded in half and after baking there is a plate full of crescent moons. filling biggies with raisins and dried fruit are great for lunches and after school. now that there are no little monsters about i make gingerbread most xmases and give them to friends for on their tree. when i've been working at a bush camp at the holiday time the adults seem to respond with as much enthusiasm as the children. once chris wanted to make a gingerbread house so we began the process by making templates for the various house parts. once cut out and baked the pieces were wrapped and off we went to grandma's for the holiday. it was a great activity for everyone decorating with m&m's , icing of many colours, candy canes chocolate santa clauses and so on. it was such a success that many years later i made one for my youngest son after he had gone to live with his dad. off he went down the street to meet his dad with his 'church', bell and all; full of wonderment. those sad days of being childless were somewhat alleviated as i wandered through the many little ethnic shops collecting the many xmas candies to decorate the church. the chocolate bell in the steeple was a treasure. as has often been the case i have turned to food as solace. not neccessarily to eat but often just to play with.

as a teen in residence in montreal i would go to the tuck shop in basemeent of hospital when my monthly allowance arrived and buy 'nice' cookies. they are a simple sugar cookie with mild coconut flavor. the other all time favorite for store bought is sultanas, not too sweet and somehow satisfying.

while on the subject of not too sweeet there is crackers or biscuits. they are always a staple with me. ordinary salted crackers always and stoned wheat and rye crisp are others. all go well with cheeses and the occasional binge of butter with honey. sometimes i crush the salty ones for toppings on casseroles. the kids loved ritz biscuits and would devour a box the evening after grocery shopping.

on a hectic day or even just a day like any other day when i was particularily down and out i would be able to make myself eat crackers and cheese.

i became interested in the danish butter cookies which appear before xmas during a very low time in my life when i was very much alone. i bought the tins because they reminded me of home and the tins mom kept in the pantry for her baking. well as it turned out the cookies were good and i now make it one of my little rituals. there was also a tea tin i was very impressed by in that same pantry. it had scenes of some exotic place on it and held a full pound of loose tea. finally a year ago i found a tin of chinese black tea which was not so fine but the best to date. i replenish it regularily

other such things have come my way mostly by chance.

there are the wonderful olive oil cans with roosters and wild birds from faraway places which make great containers for all those long handled things in kitchen. recently i have aquired a christie biscuit tin with quaint pictures and have assorted smaller candy tins in my sewing supplies. i even managed to hang onto an old player's cigarette box; hinged, of tin.

back to the garden and the array of flowers for the table, and i would scavenge huge boquets of lilacs where ever they could be found. i floated rose buds in brandy snifters and mourned the passing of summer with that last rose.

when i was feeling especially romantic i would drop a rosebud in my cup of coffee. there are so many ways to ease the pain. we picked wild flowers as well as the home grown. brown eyed susans, cone flowers were transplanted as were regular field daiseys. lupins large and many coloured were gathered as they appeared along the road sides. i gathered seed and tried jump starting them in the house to no avail. such luxurious things. tiny wild violets are admired each spring along the current river and in the past i have had some success transplanting them. the multitude of flowering bushes mixed with the joe pie and fireweed are a joy to gather and wander with. wild berries nourish for me a sense of freedom as i watch their ripening and try to beat the birds and bears to their sweetness.

sunflowers first remembered as a van gogh painting and since immortalized by so many artists are always in my gardens.

their golden tower following the sun all day. during a stay in hospital i did a series of water colours with sunflowers reaching to the heavens with castles planted on their heads. they truly are amazing and now are included in some of my bouquets.

one halcyon day when the sunflowers were at their full maturity a flock of black birds descended on the garden. many of them perched on the heads anod of the sunflowers and pecked them clean of their succulent seeds. it was a once in a life time sight and i always remember it in conjunction with old king cole with his pie of 4 and 20 blackbirds. its fun. i often use sunflower seeds in baking and salads. just throw them in muffins or greenbeans to make a little touch.

nastursiums are the wonder of my life. every warm colour is available and they taste good too. i have a photograph of myself at age 3 standing in my grandmother van.'s garden in indian head , sask.; i am smiling quite gayly and holding a bunch of nastursiums. i consider them one of my signature plants. the round veined leaves are peppery and fun in salads. the flowers can also be added to a leaf lettuce salad with its companion leaves. the colour is great and so is the flavor. once i was going to a pot luck at a prestigious house and didn't have a clue what would be acceptable. there was a foggy drizzle happening as i looked about the garden for ideas.in that muted light the nastursiums in their profusion asked to be chosen. i picked a bowl of many colours and off i went.i was surprised that in those days of flower power few of the flowers were eaten altho they are a real delicacy.some trail and some become huge mounds of evermore

blooms and each fall i collect the three sectioned nodules of the seeds. some use the seeds as a substitute for capers but i merely dry them for the following season. i love them.

while cooking at a wilderness camp i was asked to make a birthday cake for one of the female staff. there was no time to plan and so i just jumped in. i decided to try a super white cake, double batch for the gang.
since the gal was a chocolate freak i put on chocolate fudge icing and to make it special for her decorated with a profusion of nastursiums and leaves. the cakes were spectacular and i was thrilled with the discovery and ingenuity i had exercised. went on to do another with cherry flavored pink icing and daiseys. as a regular menu item one evening i made what i called 'a boreal forest cake', chocolate cake with cherry jam filling and chocolate icing.the top was decorated with borage flowers(bright blue) and mint leaves.
if there's no domesticated garden go wild.

beauty and nutritious is the goal (so often it seems) somehow a garden reiterates the bernard leach philosophy that the best pots are not only functional but have a beauty that is also a function. growing carrots from the frig in the garden to get the lovely umbels of white flowers is a fun thing. their sister the wild carrot is the beautiful queen anne's lace. the tiny red black male flower in the centre of the wild variety is a fascination.

as my studies in pottery and subsequently other traditional crafts continued my belief in beauty as a function grew. the many skilled teachers and co-students mostly affirmed that belief which i attempted to bring alive in all my activities. chris confiscated the turn of the century newspapers we discovered beneath the old linoleum on our floors and papered one of the walls in his bedroom. he tended lovingly a xmas cactus i couldn't get to bloom and had it blooming profusely. our compost pot on the back of our combination wood and electric stove was always brimming with not only kitchen scraps but flowers, ready for the pile at the corner of the garden.

sean remained committed to complete disorder and our compromise was a once a week 'mucking out' of his quarters. for sean beauty was in the sound of rock and roll. his drawings were often depictions of fearful creatures. both kids however enjoy to this day a grasp of the beautiful which escapes the pedantic in its spontanaity.

like kids, the dandelions were everywhere and knowing it was the signature flower of piet hein allowed me to enjoy their rambuncious beauty.

there were swallows in the back shed each spring until it was torn down to make way for the new studio. the kids tore it down almost completely on their own as i was very ill that year. the incredible pile of old lumber was stacked behind the studio to be used in future firings of the wood kiln i was building. we built a bird house to replace the shed but it was never populated. we discovered a closed in window on the back wall that had been hidden by the lean to shed. plans were discussed to open it up . chris with some small help from

tom sean built a deck in front of the new studio. it was built from left over lumber and scraps. no small feat. the garden had been cut in half to accommodate the studio but more of that later.

it was at this time we moved the hot box where i jump started pumpkins corn smoke, tomatoes etc.
we put it into the front garden still facing the sun. the same old cast off storm windows providing the glass top.that front area was getting crowded with a strawberry patch in a frame and an asparagus bed. i had torn out the raspberry canes as they had become badly infected with bores while i was away at art school in toronto and later barrie.

i had become more interested in herbs after finding majoram growing helter/skelter in the yard. mint owned an area near the compost which we turned regularily.after having read about composting and how the different levels have a different type of worm helping with the process i would periodically check and there they were ; blue and then red.
i planted coriander/seeds from a bottle in my cupboard and they grew with their sticky stinky flowers. chives exploded from their little spot to cover a square yard of ground with their pungent stalks and cheerful purple flowers. fresh parsley became an everyday thing.

i used to stand on the back porch some days and sing little bits of "parsley, sage, roemary and thyme" to the garden and wonder where i could find those things.

for all the activity and love i could muster the kitchen was a dark room with the two windows partially blocked . the back window was small and over ~~the~~ a counter. the house next door was not far away. i had glass shelves spnning a the area between the cupboards on either side of the window. it was there i grew the many varieties of violets.
they flourished there in the muted light and i learned how to start new plants to pass along to friends, others, involved in the delicate process of tending violets with velvet leaves and spritely flowers; we traded ideas and plants. it was a hobby. the other window was by the sink and looked out over the garden and on to the lake. in the summer i kept a narrow necked vase i had made for the icelandic poppies i would pick each morning on my first round thru the yard. the porch roof overhung the window (so it was mostly where) and i would stand there those long days of illness . i supervised the construction of my studio from that window;mostly unseen but seeing. our many cats, but especially strawberry would come to the window when they wanted to come into the house or sometimes just to say hello.it was my window on the world.

the pantry was a separate room behind the kitchen. it was there i hung the plants to dry and put the flowers and buds to make pot pourris. not being able to find orris root in the local pharmacies slowed down my development in that department for awhile.the turkish poppies which had come with the house continued with selective collection of seed pods to populate the yard. some of the dried seeds were put in breads in a random way altho i now know there are many traditional ways to use them

those two windows gave me great flights of fancy as i would watch the flock of pidgeons swirl over their favorite roof-tops . the neighbourhood raven swept by regularily. the young carpenters danced their merry way through the task of building leaving a trail of devastation in the yard.
i caught sight of 'snowflakes' lover, a big tan dog of no merit except his undying adoration of my dog.
the puppies were born that sping under the studio and sean being small and agile crawled under and brought each one out to be admired. 4 off white and one black and white spotted went into the pantry to safety and that beautiful samoyed came in to the house for the first time in her life. her previous housing had been an old wooden wine barrel turned on its side on the porch with a blanket in the bottom.
in warm weather the door was left open and that simple act somehow created a spaciouness. whenever possible i sat on the back steps and had my coffee. i sunbathed and mused on the activities of the ants.

some days i would count the lakers and vicariously enjoy the sailboats flitting about, some escaping to beyond the break wall and calling forth my experiences of sailing on the atlantic coast.how i loved those moments of lifting on the surge of a wave and diving to the depths of those black troughs. i watch with enthusiasm all i can find of those dreams of literally sailing off into the sunset.

whenever i have a very small kitchen i imagine i am at sea and exercise my galley fantasies. camping is another approach to cooking from a limited larder and improvising with simple ingredients and playing with dried herbs and spices.
the supplies carried on some of my extended canoe trips have become household staples. bacon in huge slabs has led me to prefer thich cut bacon and i sometimes throw big chunks of bacon in pea or lentil soups. add a teaspoon of curry powder or cumin and its done.cous cous was introduced to me on one such trip. add a package of dried vegetable soup and a meal is ready. a medley of dried fruits stewed and spooned over rice is another. it goes on and on.

never is there a trip taken when a roadside grocery stands to offer its bounty. an apple and an orange with some not too sweet biscuit - the first firing in pottery - and some cheese is bought. somewhere down the road there's a place to stop and picnic. if i'm well organized i'll have found a liquor store and bought myself a bottle of table wine and when i'm very frivolous some ice. fortunately for me i can lie in the sun or the shade or go for a swim to complete the relaxation.
how many waterfalls have i seen while intoxicated with such a feast.

an interesting aspect of my ongoing leaning experience is how much i've learned by reading the blurbs on the packages - the labels. i have often been annoyed by mostly men coming into my kitchen and asking me this or that related to cooking when they have not even bothered to look at the packaging.

what is it about these characters that provokes such an is-
sidious disregard for my knowledge and so few inherent talents
of their own. is there a misguided belief that i am somehow
honoured to feed and provide amusement for them at no exp-
enditure of intellect to themselve?
read the labels.
what i learned from my mother is limited to ironing men's
shirts and doing the dishes. i did the dishes in spades when
i built my studio and fired 100's of mugs, bowls, plates,
t-pots and colanders. if i never "do" another dish in any way
i will still have done more than most.

that wildwood of a garden follows me with the bleeding hearts
and marsh marigolds resplendent. the bleeding hearts were
always a part of a little bouquet i gathered for beside the
sink. they accompanied the lily of the valey which was my
mother -in-laws favorite and johnny jump ups. the johnny's
chased about the garden prolifically and the bleeding hearts
told the tale of unrequitted love. as the story goes the
handsome prince fell in
love with a fair princess and offered her his heart. she refused
it. then he tore open his heart and proffered two pink rabbits.
still she refused. next he offered a pair of high heeled
dancing shoes and still she said no. so he drew the sword from
its ~~ease~~ sheath and pierced himself thru the heart; and so we have
the bleeding hearts. in early summer take apart a ripe flower
- very gently divide it. you will see. my maiden aunt margaret
told me this long ago and i have passed the story on to many.

once again i have the johnny's which i bought only last year on mother's day. i am searching for someone to split their bleeding heart. and i will find some lily's to keep my mint happy along the fence.

fences have a privacy about them. they define the line between me and them. somehow even the open variety protect. during the years i was building the studio i was also building a fence along the laneway. we got the posts 7 feet tall in and strung chicken wire to keep out the dogs and at least some of the kids. the kiln and studio being a place where i needed not only solitude from, but also to protect the strays from equipment lying about. ~~when~~ broke, i headed down to rail yards and salvaged load after load of the lumber used to close the box car doors. it was scrap and free. the fence became a sculptural exercise with boards of many widths and heights ~~were~~ banded together . as many were already mutilated on at least one end i began to rough up the top edge to produce a wild effect. the opening to the lane was spanned with a large weathered board in which i burnt the name of my studio. ivy was planted and eventually grew to trail along those upper edges. i was definitely pleased.

i once again fantasized and became huck finn's soul mate. it was never painted but allowed to age gracefully. i would leave all kinds of treasures along the lane side for garbage men and wanderer's to pilfer thru. an old and almost useless pair of genes were nailed up in a leaping position to proclaim

my phlosophy, battered and off beat as it was.

the children of our enclave came and picked berries and were given pumkins for hallowe'en lanterns. many of them were of european descent so the wild faces we made on those orange globes truly scared the ghosts away.when the jack o'lanterns became pupkin pie they finally believed i really was magical. one little guy used to come in the house occasionally and play the piano for me.the same boy brought me plants his mother was throwing away and even a broken mirror.two teen boys, strong and uninhibited helped me fly the arched roof of my wood burning kiln. the form which i had built on finally had to come out of its support position. those kids were able to push it through with me yelling instructions from the other end. we flew 700 pounds of fire brick that day. magic only the innocent and the knowledgible can appreciate.

i never fired that kiln as i was forced to sell my property and equipment before that could happen. i did use the indoor electric kiln built from a kit. while at school, and for others; i built, and fired, or assisted many such events. there is a mystique about wood that permeates the life of one dedicated to wood firing. salvage operations become a way as trees are cut and abandoned and old buildings torn down. to get the best results the wood has to be dried for abour a year the thickness has to be regulated as well so an axe is always useful. one young indian kid used to come by to chop wood as a means of getting off the streets. i always had firewood for the den and kitchen.

there were others who would appear to look or question. some bought pots and later furniture as i needed funds to keep us going. there is little left of those times ; a few books which hold the academic retaliation to those hungry fools who always plead poverty or time as their excuse for wanting something for nothing. some of the travelling road show came by and talked and banged nails. many came for dinner not to return even an invitation in kind. we had great fun the kids and i roofing the studio with cedar shakes left over from the house.their friends joined us on the roof and knowing only what i could figure from visual experience we put on the most beautiful tight, jagged edged roof in the city.the house done professionally was a poor country cousin to our efforts.

during the time the carpenters were about i made brunch for them and gallons of coffee. i stopped when i saw them arrive one day with a big bag of big macs of which i was offered nothing. my generous spirit was beginning to wane.

i had been introduced to a poet type during those days newly free. probably mostly on my instigation we began an affair that once tumultuous and passionate is now merely a tentative truce. we had our days of wine and roses and like joanne woodward i have become an alcoholic. mostly i'm just a dry drunk these days.

many of the uniniated call kilns 'ovens' and most potters' workshops include a trading of recipes for glazes proven . there is the 'bread and butter' trade which usually includes the easy to throw and decorate. slip trailing compares to decorating a cake with a cone. a fork can be used to cross hatch surfaces to be stuck together and cutting and carving requires knives.for rolling out slabs a rolling pin is used. i like to have an old 'black tower' wine bottle around to remind me of kitchen bottles once a standard production item. empty jars held oxides and those giant pickle jars from cafeterias the more copious amounts of tin oxide and zirco-pax (both whiteners for glazes.)

spatulas are used to scrape the wheel clean in preparation for the next throw.an old grinding wheel stone can refine the bottoms of fired pots with bits of whatever stuck on by oversight during firing. in the studio as in the kitchen i have a stool at my work table and there's almost always a cigarette burning beside a cold cup of coffee.

it's the same place really, the difference is that in one i make the pots and in the other i use them.

its a very simple life. grow the food , make the pots, cook the food and then eat it. hopefully there will be someone to buy the wine.

on to the history of my serious study of wine. initially it was a romantic gesture served with those meals of company leading to hours of mad discussion. once the flow had begun in those frantic days of the poet's attention i began to cook

with wine a little. and of course once the bottle is open why not have a glass. a half a cup into the clay baker with the cheap little chicken and somes veggies and garden herbs and a gourmet feast is on its way.

it was years ago on the west coast that my then sister-in-law threw together such a meal. i knew about the clay bakers but had never cooked or eaten from one. she did it minus the wine and i was duly impressed. when i got my chance to buy a baker at a yard sale for $3 i grabbed it.i now have 3.

no respectable cheese fondu can exist without some white wine. i got the recipe i use by looking thru recipe books in a books store. i felt quite furtive as i poked through those manuels that adorn the shelves of rich people. what a treasure it is and free. it is definitely another fun meal.great for vege-tarians and wine drinkers alike. i bought a nutmeg grinder at that time, a finest hour.

another great wine dish is a clam and fresh tomatoe sauce i make when i want a change from the regular spagetti sauce i make. it calls for red wine and is a genuine aphrodasiac.

there are many more like simmering pears ; peeled and cored in almost any wine with a touch of butter and sugar, even freshly grated nutmeg of cinnamon. serve hot. add rum to jam while cooling to place in jars.pour a little grands marnier or almost any preferred liquer over ice cream. top with chocolate shavings or sprinkle with spice.deliciously awful marichino cherries are festive if the fear of cancer isn't prevailing.

the glorious rhum pot given long ago by a lady potter is a delight i concoct each summer i have access to lots of fresh raspberries and whatever else is around. just keep adding rhum and fruit and the pot will take on the colour of the added fruit. i like it best when the raspberries predominate. drink straight on ice or mixed with mineral water. float a sprig of mint on top.

brandied fruit is oozing sweet, voluptuous. drain canned fruit and measure each time. add an equal amount of white sugar. allow each combination to sit in a covered jar for roughly 3 weeks or until it begins to ferment. then add another variety of canned,drained fruit and more sugar; stir and allow to sit again until fermentation is evident. continue until you run out of choices. a thick syrup with a strong hint of brandy will be the end result. extra long sitting ensures a "higher" batch. i use this as a sauce for ice cream. [poet] once devoured an entire jar in two days.

it was while living in a semi-communal house years ago that i began to appreciate sangria. a house guest of one of the other tenants brought me a jug he'd mixed up. we sat on the balcony and enjoyed the summer night. i had first had sangria in spain but this was something i could make myself. the time and place were right.add wine and fruit juice,preferably orange with sparkling mineral water. squeeze in some chunks

of orange, lemon and or lime. lots of ice and good friends will provide a lively evening or afternoon of conversation and reminiscence.

critical to the survival of all us human being types is a social community. parties represent to me the core of that side of life. be it two or twenty it can be fun.
for me a party means talking, maybe dancing, maybe food and something to drink; maybe coffee.usually there 's some food which can run the gamut of munchies like popcorn or taco chips and salsa to turkey with all the trimmings. pot luck parties a tradition in this area are right out front about the priority of food. live bands and outdoor locations are supreme as is evidenced by the attendance at the winnipeg folk festival last year - over 20,000.now that's a party.

at the w.f.f. there is a food alley that serves up a wide variety of mostly vegetarian foods. the politics are clear - whale's tails and cosmic burgers.

that particular festival is 18 years old and i've made it 3 times. mariposa was my first such event. i went to center island with folk from the school of design. my thanks one year was to purchase at kensington market a live white pidgeon being sold for eating and carry it on the ferry for release on the island. it was a bird not expecting to be free and when i put the brown paper bag on the ground with the end open the bird ran out took a look and ran back into the bag. finally the cooing of the resident doves lured her out and they all flew off. i can only hope to freedom. i always love to

hear them and pretend they are not raised for dinner. someday i hope to have a pair to roost on the porch.

we sat in the rain and listened to musicians i had yet to hear the names of. my work mate from school helped me liberate the men's loo - it had a much shorter line. i vividly remember the craft lanes which encouraged me to continue with my endeavors at the wheel. i still buy the miniature clay figures from china depicting sages. it was there i first saw them. my love of the music grows and i have become more knowledgible. bluegrass is my great love and celtic ballads fast gaining. i'm a northern european by descent and preference. having found a world i can relate to helps a lot.

locally there used to be the summer solstice celebration. local and outside musicians gathered with craftspeople, families and friends.

there was a food area and later a beer garden . at my instigation one year we began a large craft village. because of my association with the crafts i knew many many people who crafted either full time or casually. the first year i worked on the event we had over 60 people showing ,selling and demonstating.i personally merely organized with one other gal who later moved on . the records were somehow misplaced and we never had such a good show again. we had other events in many different places and i worked on 4 of them. i always hoped for some continuing friendships to emerge but they never did.

the intoxicating sounds, smells and sights of these fairs is tantalizing. it speaks of a life stlye i long for, a world i can only enter briefly. i watch and listen and wonder why i am denied entry to the life. i cook the foods and have the craft skills but somehow i don't have the language. if only i could sing along with all the other talents i'm told i possess. there are so many lonely people, we sit in little clusters and share these grand picnics and never speak. even the people i am with or know a little at these things never seem to speak. somewhere there must be a conversation, an embrace, a reward for work well done.

there are also the many places i have wrked with food. the fiddlehead restaurant was a women's co-op that specialized in "health food".while waitressing and job hopping there i became intimately aquainted with spanakopita.i love its greasy good for you taste and smell. more cheese. the cheese-cake in every flavour was a killer which i ate regularily. tabouli and the many salads,home made breads and cookies curries and many ways of serving rice remade my eating life. it was during this time i was menopausal and gaining weight. the terrific food was a salvation. the personal politics of the place were something else with so many fingers in the till. i finally quit in disgust.the decor was cold and calculated to get the most out of the government grant monies. everything was politically correct and tedious including most of the people. the only relief was when one of the women the hiring policy was designed to help would actually behave in a fashion

related to their work related handicap. one gal who had several addiction problems spilled an entire tray of food; hot soup included; on a customer. they were the typical uptight tight assed types who fequented the place.i was on that night and managed to salvage the event. the head cook regularily threw temper tantrums and i was on a couple of occasions able to tell her off. she was outright abusive. as a make work project it certainly did that. there was the time one of lesser mortals "lifted" a jar of the very expensive jam. for the next month we were lectured by one of the "rip off" queens in charge, about honesty; and the storage area in basement was filled with activity as a friend of management installed several thousands of dollars of locked cupboards. the hypocracy continued for a few years after i left and the wonderful stained glass window that looks like a child's toy car track and the handmade furniture now live at a local espresso restaurant. people who write grant requests don't seem to know much about people and the clientel dissappeared along with the money.

i have watressed ,etc. in other places and have learned that almost everyone who comes into a restaurant is there to enjoy. service and good humour are all anyone really wants. i have watched in these places on

and very few people expect the waitresses to exhibit anything more than simple courtesy altho most of them are the ultimate bitches.

having also worked in bush camps i can say that generally food personnel are often nasty. they bicker over tips and tables. there is a scramble for shifts and the pecking order is hard to figure.

the J.R. camps with the dozens of 17 year old boys and all their foibles were the best. in spite of being quite young at the time (i was the foreman's wife) and had status outside the kitchen. slicing whole beef liver for the first time was memorable but the guys were easy to please as long as they left full. i love the big grills and have learned about them over the years. cleaning them is critical and strenuous.

the c.n. camp at the north end of lake kapuskasing was great. the men there liked the food but found me odd. i cleaned the stove and hood til it shone and many other similar acts of hygiene. it proved too much for them. they were like small children in their attachment to their regular cook. i tried new recipes and little was turned down. the cherry almond cake i began making there dissappeared immediately. it is much like a fruit cake with rich buttery taste and bright red cherries. as a parting shot before i threw out the sour dough starter i had begun; i made a last loaf of bread. i had been making various herbed breads and braids with cinnamon and sugar. this time i made a dragon. he was wonderful and i suspect they were somewhat abashed. the little foxes that came to steps each night for scraps; were well fed and provided me with many hours of distraction. the big old tramp dog got fed earlier in evening and was my companion on day

time walks.the stolen ride in a high railer with the switch man was exciting and i saw a great gray owl.the jays and raven s competed for the things i left on the picnic table at back. i got many rides in the trains and met prospectors and men scarred by the brutality of days in the 40 below snow. some of them in a wistful way responded to my too soft manner in ways i still appreciate. i was sorry to leave.

my interest in outward bound activities prompted me to inquire about the possibilities of kitchen employment. i went in for a month after someone had quit and left the head cook stranded. i had a tiny unheated cabin and electricity til 10 at night. sirius, my dog, and i enjoyed our time together in the surrounding woods and when i wasn't cooking or reading i painted tole designs over the windows and doors in the large, mostly white kitchen. again i found people very reserved in their acceptance of me. they loved the food from the watermelon basket filled with fresh fruit salad to creme caramel. they made fun of my manner and with held friendship i quit two days before my time was up after having suffered one too many personal insults.i am sensitive and do not find negative behavior stimulating. i become less and less able to live in the real world which i long for with a passion that may yet destroy me.

muffin recipes

whenever there's a gang to make muffins for i have 3 standbys. the bran came off the original box of bran i bought and add raisins ,seeds, and slightly less molasses than called for. i don't like bran much so now rarely make them. the oat meal blueberry is terrific using wild blueberries. when i

don't get to pick them i buy them at exorbinant prices around town. carrot cake has become muffins and is supreme, passed on by a guy who likes to cook. the giant nutmeg sugar cookies are a lot of fuss but taste great. another pass along from art school. i love butter tarts so cook them whenever i am at a camp cooking. i make them 'nuts' and 'sane'.

big pots of chili are standard fare. i always make lots of hearty soups and have a few favorites for just at home like egg drop soup.

there are all the moments of poignancy such as the time a guy and i stopped to eat looking out over one of our beautiful northern lakes. we were sitting on the patio watching boats and clear blue skies. a monarch butterfly dipped down into his glass of beer and into my glass of wine. then flew on.

another time a man who drank in the bar i was working at called me in off the street for a chicken dinner on new years day. he had a garden i became well aquainted with as the years passed. i helped weed and planted some herbs. there were extra beets for borche and bits and pieces of this and that. tips growing along back lanes and wild flowers everywhere which i now can name . i collect wild mint in a few places and make fresh tea. there are bunches of tansy, pearly everlasting and purple loosestrife hanging in my livingroom.

the quilts i make are on the go through out the apartment as are knit rock and roll dolls. marigold soup is waiting in the freezer for that time when i am ready to dye in that soft yellow . my present sage plant is going into its third year and has savored many a chicken in the terra cotta clay baker bought cheap at a yard sale.

when i got married i received a cheque to buy myself some cooking pots.i searched peterborough and couldn't find a one. what i got was a double boiler with a copper plated lid. that was the beginning and i now have many copper pots, many hanging on the kitchen wall along with baskets, and other basic utensils. i still use the silver plate mom gave as a wedding prsent. my $3 blender makes tiger's milk . a grape-fruit tree stands in the window begun with a seed 7 years ago. most of the plants now have terra cotta pots which i love the look of. the avocado tree is recovering from my last ab-sence. there's usually a few starter cuttings on the go and the proverbial invincible philodendrom in one of the few remaining planters i made.i still have one of the majolica plates from italy, on wall for safety. prints of plums and bread and pears decorate the empty spaces. sean made me a bread board in grade 8 shop and i keep it with me wherever i go. i have a collection of bowls of all sizes, none matching. actually very little matches in there.i have need of a kitchen clock out of habit.

restaurants are major signifiers in the world of food. as i cook to eat i enjoy having none of the resonsibility for shopping prep and clean up. the hoito used to be a popular spot to get a good meal cheap. since modernization the charm has diminished and the clientel changed. occasionally i still go there for finn pancakes which i lather with butter , sprinkle with white sugar and roll up crepe style. i've never seen anyone else do it that way but it was my mother who used to tell me the story of when she was a child. she would be sent to get a pail of milk from family down the road. often they would give her such a treat to eat on her way home. another of my regular there is the pan steak. an inexpensive steak is cooked in a tomatoe and onion mix. they make not bad pan fries with the cheese omelettes as well.

for a time i tried a different restaurant locally whenever there was a few extra dollars. i now know where the decent salad bars are and sunday afternoon wine drinking.a big mac still hits the spot and my dog sirius is always happy to eat his plain burger on the way home. he dances a fine dance for each chunk as we stroll along the creek. i miss the all nite spots that used to be available for late nite breakfasts or chinese. there are some good chinese restaurants here and i still like to go for what has become a routine feed. the won ton soup at one place is fantastic.huge slices of bar-b-q pork floating with soft won tons in a delectable broth . i love egg rolls with plum sauce almost as much. over the years i have mastered chop sticks and rice bowl lifting each morsel to my lips with finess. i can choose the individual bites with agility and am warmed by the respect

i make a fried rice at home that's pretty good.my visits to china town in vancouver and toronto have taught me about the teas and peanut sauses. i have a floral tea pot and little matching tea bowls for those quiet moments of oolong. i love to wander through the busy market area streets with sidewalks spilling over with people,many chinese, and stalls of fre

piled high with fresh greens and unfamiliar vegetables and fruits.those wonderful handcrafted crocks once emptied of their 100 year old eggs are still available. people of the wide world push and babble as they clutch their live lobsters and haggle over price. the most elevated of of all the shops is the ginseng store with its uniformed attendants and glass cases of tiny immaculate tea pots for serving the ginseng.clay jars of candied ginger compete with great knuckles of raw ginger.

in toronto one of my haunts often included in a trip to chinatown is kensington market. located just off spadina and dundas its definitely a day trippers paradise. here again is a kaliedescope of sensations. mostly european in character it is difficult to not want something from each shop. havarti cheese and fresh baked caraway rye bread along with a clutch of grapes or some pears joined by a bottle of wine from over on spadina and i'm ready for anyone. before the run through the food area i often poke around in the second hand clothing stores and boutiques.sometimes i'll sit in a cafe and watch the parade of shoppers and artists who frequent

the area. i would love to live in one of these areas with the gardens in the front yard and little verandas with wicker chairs.

down town on water street are many more interesting shops and st.lawrence market which is housed in two big old building s. its a wonderland which i thoroughly enjoy. there are restaurants and outdoor craft stalls. sometimes buskers add to the daily celebration of the feast. granville market is the vancouver equivelent. there
an art school participates in the atmosphere of bohemian camaradie. a coffee break by the water and boat watching are extras.once after shopping for my weekly groceries i was standing waiting for a bus home and tore off a chunk of fresh caraway rye. i split a tooth on it. i now sport a gold tooth for that trouble.for 3 days i actually worked in one of the fish shops. i loved it but the young manager was out for blood and i didn't need it. it was fun.

in those days we ate a lot of smoked salmon and fresh crab meat. living just off commercial there were many little cafes and restaurants. once we ate in a place with a gypsie playing a violin as he wandered from table to table. a little portugese restaurant was reminscent of spain and originated my passion for creme caramel.

paintings on the wall always make me dream.

in toronto there are almost as many restaurants as shops. its hard to resist the temptation of the variety that's offered. i was introduced to several places which became regulars ~~eating places~~. there is a hungarian restaurant that doubled in size after i found it. often i would eat alone there and found the servings overwhelming. on special events with a gang we would order their specialty which is a platter of grilled meats brought to the table with sparklers ablaze. crepes and studel follow the paprika potatoes and entre swallowed down with many glasses of wine. the head waitress is a wonder as she looks after her regulars and newcomers with efficiency and expertise. often she was the only person i exchanged friendly words with in a day. all along my travels on queen street west there were sidewalk cafes to rest over a coffee or glass of wine.

musicians and side walk vendors add to air of festivity and it is a life that i find irresistable. our local farmers market adds a touch of colour in the summer here but the zest is missing. i love this isolated northern mega village and the surrounding wilderness. i also the love the wilderness of our sophisticated metropolis. the missing ingrediant is the candlelight exchanges with a beloved.

feb.9/93

add in ré present garden - big pots - birds & caterpillars cats - neighbors walks - flowers deck - habatchi fish burgers chick ribs

finished re read / Feb 14/93 - Valentine's

Cafeterias

broken leg - phone Home care