



THE BOOK NOOK

BY LEA ZELTSERMAN

ROSE MURRAY'S TASTE OF CANADA

If you hadn't noticed, Canadian cuisine is on a roll. Or perhaps it's just finally coming into its own. The past year has seen the publication of several new books dedicated to the food on our tables, from Elizabeth Driver's *Culinary Landmarks*, a tome on our cookbook history, to Anita Stewart's *Canada* and Margaret Webb's *Apples to Oysters*. Adding to the chorus is Rose Murray's newly released *A Taste of Canada: A Culinary Journey* which, like Stewart's book, mines the richness of our cultural heritage and vast geography. The word is in: our cuisine is all about embracing that abundance. It's international and local, a fusion of past and present. And it's also regional, changing from coast to coast. A bit confusing, very exciting – and thoroughly Canadian.

"Increasingly, Canadian food, or cuisine, is being interpreted as a licence to sample from the best the world's kitchens have to offer, all brought directly to our shores by waves of immigrants," says Murray. This sentiment comes through in her recipe selection, which includes traditional staples like seafood stew and less recognizably Canadian offerings such as green curry chicken. Some of her recipes are common throughout the country, while others are very specific to a region, based on its indigenous products and also on the immigrants who settled in the area.

A resident of Cambridge, Ontario, Murray is a veteran of the Canadian food scene. A familiar name to readers of *Canadian Living* magazine (executive editor Elizabeth Baird penned the book's forward), among other publications, she's been writing and talking about food for thirty years; *A Taste of Canada* is her tenth book. Previous works include the award-winning *Hungry for Comfort* and *A Year in My Kitchen*. Murray also frequently appears on radio and television, and at events such as the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto.

A Taste of Canada is divided into traditional recipe groupings, with the addition of regional sections (with some provinces and territories standing alone and others grouped, such as the Maritimes and the North) that provide an overview of the foods in that area and a suggested menu, such as a Picnic in Stanley Park or a Midnight Sun Supper. Individual ingredients are showcased with brief discussions of their place in Canadian cuisine. Cooks both old and new will find something here, with old standbys and more traditionally Canadian offerings given lively twists: Butter Tarts in Phyllo, Tourtière Turnovers, Chipotle Maple

Baked Beans, and Pickered BLT all reflect Murray's pronouncement that "food is a pleasure. It's not drudgery to make and it shouldn't be scary."

Her decades of experience have clearly kept her in touch with the average cook in the kitchen, and this book displays a strong connection with the needs of that cook. Traditions may have gotten updates and international cuisine plays a major role, but Murray remains grounded in the practicalities of the task throughout. "When I talk to people, they seem to like the new ideas," she explains. "But it's almost always with things you can [readily] buy at the grocery store." It may seem like an obvious point, but this type of attention to detail is what takes a cookbook from an occasional dip for special guests to a daily go-to.

Eating local food comes naturally for Murray, who grew up on a farm where self-sufficiency was a matter of survival. "There's a great swing back to using things that are local," she says. "It's funny, because that's how I grew up. We made our own butter and things. We ate local out of necessity, but we ate very well." Nonetheless, for Murray, Canadian food straddles the grey zone between eating local and appreciating the benefits of international imports. "There are many, many things that grow in other countries and we should not say 'no.' Lemons are one example," she says.

After thirty years of writing about food, Murray is still excited about what we're serving on our tables. If anything, time has given her a strong sense of how we've grown into our food selves. Yes, we're starting to eat locally and seasonally, but perhaps more importantly, "people are also more adventurous. They're travelling more, and then they come home and want to try new things," she says. "It's very exciting."

A Taste of Canada: A Culinary Journey, by Rose Murray
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