

Is it true what they say about Canadian cooking?



Mme. Jehane Benoit, as the dean of Canadian cookery and food editors, has one trait in common with her counterpart Julia Child and to some extent with Fanny Farmer and Irma Rombauer: she not only gives clear instructions, she gives the reasons for the instructions.

Canadian cookery tends to be hearty. As another of Canada's food experts, Margo Oliver of the *Montreal Star*, has noted, "The Canadians had a pretty rugged life in the early days with no time for the subtleties. They had heavy, solid foods to suit the climate."

Mme. Benoit's recipes, like the hearty food, have lots of substance. As readers of her picturesque *Canadiana Cookbook* or her columns in the national weekend supplement *Canadian Magazine* know, they also have flavor and a touch of frivolity to keep the reader interested. You learn that every bride once had a covered iron pot for pot au feu in her dowry (but not any more); that soup must boil slowly twice for the scum to rise for clearer broth; that French Canadian cooking is seasoned with molasses and the standard English spices, rather than the varied herbs of the French; and that Mme. Benoit's daughter makes the best doughnuts in the world.

"My granddaughter Susan who is eighteen can cook, of course, but my grandson Ian is very good, too, but he only deals in the very exotic — teriyaki, Swedish wafers, blinis."

Mme. Benoit is sixty-seven and a graduate in food chemistry from the Sorbonne. She has taught more than eight thousand students in her cooking school in Montreal and has written many cookbooks, including an encyclopedia that weighs about as much as a standing rib roast. She has had cooking programs on Canadian radio and television for eighteen years.

She is most emphatic that there is a distinct type of cookery called Canadian:

"Some people say there is no difference between Canadian and American cooking. Not right! We don't flavor the same way. Our baked beans in Quebec are not a bit like your baked beans in Vermont. There is a strong French influence in Quebec, a very strong Scottish influ-

ence in Nova Scotia. The West has been greatly influenced by the American way of life but it is the French and Scotch influence that is the strongest."

The French influence is most felt on Réveillon, the Christmas Eve celebration when neighbors are invited for a heavy meal after Midnight Mass. Mme. Benoit and her husband invite many neighbors to Réveillon each year at their farm near Sutton, Quebec.

"When you leave for church everything is done. The table is all set with the best cloth and dishes, the soup is ready for the oysters and much homemade bread is baked.

After the traditional oyster soup, there is gallantine of port and seven to eight types of homemade cheese sauces, ketchups, pickles (always sweet, never dill). The famous tourtière, the meat pie, is served next.

The French Canadians have a well developed sweet tooth and we never entertain, certainly not at Christmas, without fruit cake and three or four deserts, French trifle, and jellied or poached fruits. We don't feel we're entertaining the right way at Réveillon unless we have many sweets.

We go to bed at 4:30 or 5:00 — there's a little bit of drinking, you know, but then there's no Mass the next day. Christmas dinner is served around six for family only, but Réveillon is the big celebration."

[TOURTIÈRE]

This recipe has been in Mme. Benoit's family for three generations and it's generally admitted there are no two recipes for tourtière that are the same.

1 lb. ground pork	¼ t. ground cloves
1 chopped onion	½ c. water
1 minced garlic clove	¼-½ c. breadcrumbs
½ t. salt	pastry
¼ t. celery salt	

Place all but the breadcrumbs in a saucepan and bring to a boil for 20 minutes over medium heat. Remove from the flame and add a few breadcrumbs. Let it stand for 10 minutes. If the fat is sufficiently absorbed by the crumbs, add no more. If not, do.