

# Belated Yuletide greetings from Santa Foth

**Ben Schaub**

It's a bloody cold winter morning as you trudge down Sparks St. finally reaching the ugly brown building that contains the Southam News bureau. Up on the fifth floor, reporters and columnists are busy preparing for the new session of Parliament. And in a sparse office sits Allan Fotheringham.

On the wall is a mask from Bali and several original cartoons from Peterson, the artist whose visual barbs accompany Fotheringhams' rantings on the back page of *Maclean's*. In addition to writing the most-read section in *Maclean's*, he holds three million readers with his popular columns for Southam News.

Fotheringham is a short owlish man with a friendly demeanor. Recently returned from a Palm Springs vacation, he is tanned and relaxed. Yet somehow he reminds you of your high school vice-principal after the March break.

**Malice in Blunderland** is his first "real book-book," he says. "It's my first attempt to see if I can do a lengthy number and it seems to have worked out quite well."

The book has maintained third place on the Canadian best-seller list and the reviews have been generally favourable. When the critics complain they point out that the book seems to be a bit of a relish of old 'Foth' Southam and *Maclean's* to the regular reader.

"Not at all," he counters. "Only 10 or 15 per cent is reworked columns. The rest is original material."

But to the seasoned Fotheringham watcher, *Malice in Blunderland* is a compilation of vintage themes. Set in a geographic framework, the good Dr. Foth travels from the East Coast to the Pacific, reviewing the merits of each province and major city. Ottawa, of course, gets the worst review.

On Ottawans: "Anyone who must shovel his way down the steps, chip the ice from his car, hold a match to the door lock to thaw it and then inch to work behind a snow plow is not going to smile at his desk — he is going to take revenge on his fellow Canadians."

Toronto gets it too: "The problem with Toronto is that it is imitative. It does not want to be itself. The Big Lemon (As it is known in Western Canada) suffers from municipal penis envy."

"I hate Ottawa," he says. "Being basically a lazy person I hate having to bundle up in layers of clothing. I'd rather just grab a raincoat and go."

Fotheringham refuses to live in Ottawa full-time. Therefore he travels back and forth between Narcissus-on-the-Pacific (Vancouver) and "Ennuui-on-the Rideau" (Ottawa). This fortnightly migration is documented complete with commentary on Air Canada food. We are also supplied with lists of things he ac-

tually likes: oranges, cheese, and Robert Stanfield to mention a few.

But *Malice in Blunderland* is mostly concerned with things Fotheringham doesn't like, namely the federal Liberals. "They should be thrown out of office and sentenced to eight years in the wilderness," he says.

In addition to ascerbic dissertations on how Trudeau has alienated everyone from one another, Fotheringham blends in historical actuality. His recounting of the late-night bedroom deal that struck Canada's constitution is full of intrigue, while a true cynical tone is maintained.

On Trudeau, Fotheringham confesses he was once an enthusiastic supporter during the 1968 election. An honest exhibitionist, he gives excerpts from columns from 1968 to the present.

The columns reveal a rapid disenchantment with the PM. "Sure, I was caught up in it all," says Foth. "Just like everybody else...the press is like a radar system for the public. We saw the energy there and reported it."

Time will age *Malice in Blunderland* rapidly. In a sense, it is rooted so firmly in the present that it will matter little in 10 years. Fotheringham writes of the upcoming Tory conference in Winnipeg, and of who he thinks will be the next prime minister.

Is this book simply an extended magazine column? "It is very topical," he

says. He has already updated the manuscript for the paperback edition due out in June.

Fotheringham says *Malice in Blunderland* was difficult to write because he did not have the time. His publisher accommodated him with a workable timetable, but restricted him and his book editors to a Christmas deadline. Thus the book repeats itself. John Crosbie is called "the only Canadian who speaks neither official language" several times.

"There wasn't time to edit the thing properly," he confesses.

Foth had to get it out in time for Christmas. Hmm. The printed word is no longer sacred.

Meanwhile back in the city of his rath, the humble scribe is asked if he is a cynic: "No. I'm a bruised idealist. If I were a cynic I would be in Los Angeles writing sitcoms for tons of money, or I would be doing a P.R. job nine to five."

Outside, the wind has picked up and hurls civil servants down the Sparks St. Mall. The snow needles your face and freezes your brain. Fotheringham's diatribe on Ottawa winters is as fresh on your mind as the wind which anaesthetizes your cheeks. Last night, a friend in L.A. said his copy of *Malice in Blunderland* has gone through the hands of seven Americans. They could not believe this place exists.

## Food 101: Easy-to-Make Desserts

### CHEESECAKE ON REQUEST

This cheesecake is so easy you'll almost be embarrassed to give in to the many requests you'll get for this recipe.

Preparation time: 15 minutes  
Cooking time: 20 to 30 minutes

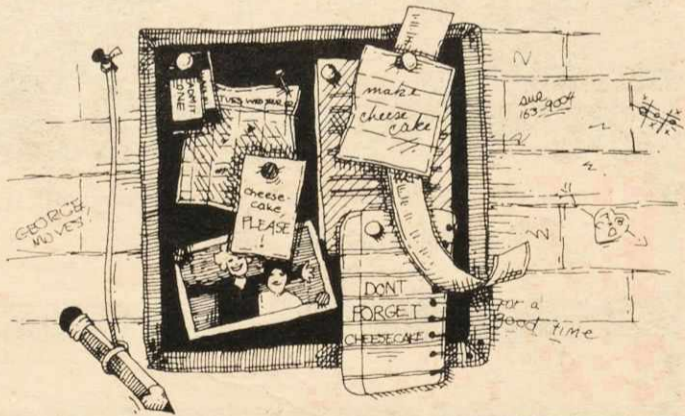
Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

Melt in a small pot over medium heat:  
1/3 cup (80 mL) butter or margarine

Combine in a small bowl:  
1 1/2 cups (375 mL) graham wafer crumbs  
1/4 cup (60 mL) icing sugar  
melted butter or margarine  
Press mixture into bottom of a pie pan. Set aside.

Beat until fluffy in a large bowl:  
1 lb. (0.5 kg) cream cheese, at room temperature  
2 eggs  
1 tsp. (5 mL) vanilla extract  
Pour over crumb mixture.  
Bake for 25 to 30 minutes.

Cool and serve.



#### Don't Start Without:

large bowl  
pie pan  
small bowl  
small pot  
large spoon  
measuring cup  
measuring spoons

#### Helpful Hints:

- If the cheese is not at room temperature, leave it on the counter for a while. Hard cheese won't combine with other ingredients smoothly.
- Cake is done when center doesn't jiggle.

#### Serving Ideas:

- Can be served plain or garnished with fresh fruit (on top).
- Any beverage, hot or cold, will complement cheesecake.

Recipe extracted from **FOOD 101: A STUDENT GUIDE TO QUICK AND EASY COOKING** by Cathy Smith, available at your bookstore or from The Canadian Student Book Club, 46 Harbord St, Toronto Ontario M5S 1G2 for only \$7.95

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