

# They're almost here! Artificial baked potatoes!

by Judy Au

When the subject of new product innovation comes up, one rarely thinks of something as old-fashioned as baked potatoes. However, a University of Alberta professor believes his newly developed instant baked potato is about to cause a sensation in the food industry.

Buncha Ooraikul, associate professor of Food Science, has recently patented a revolutionary method of processing potatoes that facilitates rapid preparation. His end-product, which looks practically identical to the real thing, is basically a cooked, mashed potato stuffed into a fabricated potato skin.

Ooraikul was asked by a local company, I & S Produce Ltd., to develop some kind of shell for an instant baked potato. According to Ooraikul, the firm had a two-fold reason for sponsoring his research.

"First, there is an increasing demand in the convenience food market for this kind of product.

People are getting tired of french fries with their high caloric value. Secondly, potatoes that can actually be used to prepare baked potatoes industrially make up for only 10 per cent of the total yearly output. This is because the characteristics of a baking potato must comply with certain standards of quality and size. There are just not enough potatoes to meet the demand."

"Fresh potatoes have other disadvantages not found in the instant version. These include bruising, rotting, and greening of the skin," said Ooraikul. "There is much concern about greening since it is toxic in high concentration."

When all these reasons are taken into account, it is apparent that a need exists for assuring a supply of consistently high quality potatoes for industrial use. The instant baked potato can fill this need since it can be produced as required by demand. Since it is composed primarily of mashed potato, the problems of adequate and regular size are avoided. In its final form, the

instant potato is frozen, thus greatly reducing the risk of perishability. Yet another advantage lies in the reduced cost of the instant baked potato compared to ordinary ones.

Over the 18 month period required to develop the new potato, Ooraikul tested upwards of 100 different materials before he came up with the potato's skin. This skin, which is virtually impossible to distinguish from "real" potato skin, is composed of all natural ingredi-

ents and has no preservatives. Ooraikul says the fabricated skin is even more nutritious than its natural counterpart.

"Fresh potato skin is mostly made up of fibre while the skin for the instant potato is also high in protein and vitamins."

Funding for Ooraikul's research was provided by both I & S Produce and the provincial and federal governments. Ooraikul is presently awaiting additional funds for

market testing the new potato. If test results are positive, then a new grant would have to be secured for the development of a pilot plant needed for a test production run.

Ooraikul is optimistic about the future success of his new potato. "If everything goes as I hope, it should be on the market sometime next year."

Food enthusiasts will have to wait until then to sample the potato of the eighties.

## Bright new hi-tech education

by Judy Au

Have you ever wondered what education in the future would be like? In the years to come, the student's best friend may be the telephone.

At the Faculte Sainte-Jean, the future is now. This January, the Faculte began their first teleconferencing course. Fifty-six students located in communities as distant as Fort McMurray and Calgary are linked with those in Edmonton through telephone lines which are joined by an electronic bridge.

The bridge, supplied by the Alberta Vocational Centre Group, allows groups of students in each of the regions to communicate with the course instructor in Edmonton as well as with students in the other regions.

This pilot course, titled "New Approaches for Teaching French in an Immersion Situation," is aimed specifically at teachers who wish to increase their professional competence in French immersion programs. However, the Faculte plans to offer future teleconferencing courses aimed at members of the general public who are isolated geographically from larger educa-

tional institutions.

Like the present course, these planned ones would be based on the andragogical approach developed by Jean Watters, the Director of the Centre for Continuing Education.

"Andragogy is the art and science of helping adults to learn," explains Watters. "The teacher's role is not so much to transmit content but to use the experience of the learners themselves by acting as a resource person or an animator."

In this situation, a local facilitator is employed in each region to act as an animator and stimulate class discussion. Discussion and a question period follow the initial instruction period of each teleconferencing session.

As well as being responsible for the course's content, the director of the education program, Claudette Tardif, is also a member of the team of instructors teaching the course. Tardif believes that teleconferencing offers distinct advantages over traditional correspondence courses.

"The feedback we get from our students in different regions of Alberta allows us to learn about the

various methods they use to deal with particular problems. Teleconferencing is a good way to exchange information. With the physical barriers existing in a wholly written correspondence course, this immediate interaction among students and instructors is not possible."

The Faculte plans to develop a network with other universities and colleges across Canada. Watters says that such co-operation among education institutions is instrumental in bringing down the costs of the programs. Presently, major funding of the teleconferencing program is supplied by the Faculty of Extension & Special Sessions.

The popularity and success of the present course has prompted scheduling of future teleconferencing courses. These include French 321, Advanced Grammar and EDADU 551, "Choices of Subjects for Adult Education," offered in spring and summer session respectively.

For further information on teleconferencing, call Claudette Tardif at 468-1254 or drop in at the Faculte at 8406-91 Street.

## Few jobs for teachers

by Neal Watson

About 1,000 U of A Education graduates will be entering a job force this month where the prospects for employment are very slim.

Ted Remple, an assistant superintendent for personnel at the Edmonton Public School Board, says the prospects for graduating education students getting jobs in the city are "dim at best."

Remple said the school board may hire 30 teachers this year depending on funding from the provincial government.

"Thirty (to hire) is a rough number," said Remple. "We're not looking at anything significant (as far as the number hired)."

However, Remple said that the prospects for substitute teaching were "relatively good." He said the school board was interviewing candidates for subbing positions.

"It is a place to start," he said. Remple said he felt that quotas on the number of students entering the faculty of education was not "necessarily the answer."

Faculty of Education Associate Dean W. Wilde said that quotas were not the answer and he did not envision the university imposing them on the faculty.

Concerning jobs prospects, Wilde said the faculty did not keep information about job placements.

He agreed with Remple, however, that the prospects were not great for graduates. According to Wilde, the faculty only received the employment survey information conducted by the Canada Employment Centre in SUB.

According to that survey, between 22 to 25 per cent of 1984 U of A education graduates found positions.

At this point, 15 have been hired by the Edmonton Public School Board. According to Rempel, 2,500 teachers have applied for about 30 positions.

Asked what advice he would give high school students wishing to enter the faculty of education, Wilde said he would urge the "need to be cautious."

Wilde said the future prospect for teachers would depend on the "provincial government's emphasis on education."

Asked about the recently announced teacher internship program for graduating students, Wilde said he was encouraged, but said it was hard to know the results.

Yard Apes

by Hans Beckers



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