

This frequent scarcity of food was in part owing to the uncertainty of the chase, but chiefly to the improvident habits of the Indians, who, when they had abundance of food, gorged themselves with it and never thought of looking for more until it was all gone. This again was caused by another custom which required all the food obtained, either by hunting or otherwise, to be equally divided; so that the active and indolent sharing alike, all incentive to industry was taken away, and no large accumulation of food ever became possible. The St. John Indians were perhaps less open to this reflection than most others, and with them there were at times some attempts made to preserve food for future use. They preserved their meat by taking the flesh from the bones and drying it in smoke, by which means it was kept sound for months, or even years, without salt. They had a curious way of drying corn when in the milk: they boiled it on the ear in large kettles until it became pretty hard; it was then shelled from the cob with sharp clam shells and dried on bark in the sun. When thoroughly dry the kernels shrivelled to the dimensions of a small pea, and it would keep for years: when boiled again, it swelled as large as when on the ears, and was said to be incomparably sweeter than any other corn.*

An Indian feast, as made by the savages of Acadie two centuries ago, was quite different from anything to be seen at the present day. The ingredients were fish, flesh, or Indian corn and beans boiled together. Sometimes, when pounded corn was plenty, hasty pudding, or porridge, was made of it. An Indian boiled a sufficient number of kettles full of food, and sent a messenger to each wigwam door, who exclaimed "*Kah mens-coorebah*," which means "I come to conduct you to a feast." The invited guest then would demand whether he must take a spoon or a knife in his dish, which was a polite way of finding out what the bill of fare was to be. When the guests were met at the wigwam of the host, two or three young men were appointed to deal out the food, which was done with the utmost exactness in proportion to the number of each man's family at home. When the guests were done eating, one of the young men stood without the wigwam door, and called out—"Mensecommock," which means "come and fetch." This was the signal for the squaws to go to their husbands,

* See narrative of John Gyles' captivity in Drake's *Tragedies of the Wilderness*. p. 83.