

In the end it was the “uniqueness, creativity, and honest simplicity” of our team’s platters that captured the respect and admiration of the judges. And the thousands of discerning visitors who saw the creations so beautifully displayed were awestruck at what Canada’s Native team could do with moose, caribou, salmon, Arctic char, wild berries, and all the other ingredients indigenous to our country.

I have been privileged to walk along a path where few others will set foot. In the tradition of my people I now have the obligation and the honour to share my good fortune. That is why I have spent so much time travelling to talk with young Native children and students over the past three years, encouraging them to go for the gold in their own lives, regardless of the career path they choose.

It is also why Robert and I have written *A Feast for All Seasons* as something more than a standard cookbook. We hope that you the reader will gain a little more insight into the cultures and traditions of Aboriginal peoples throughout Canada, expressed from the Wet’suwet’en heart.

The recipes and menus are ones I created over the years. As you will see, there is a strong Pacific Northwest Native flavour to most of them, but I have also been influenced by traditional Native recipes from all regions of Canada.

A Feast for All Seasons is about friendship, sharing, enjoyment, and love among the creatures of Mother Earth. Robert and I hope you will feel the same way after you have joined us on our journey through these pages.

Miss’ie. Thank you. Meegwetch.

Andrew George Jr. and Robert Gairns

WET’SUWET’EN

The First People of the Valley

Andrew’s people, part of the Carrier Nation, are known as the Wet’suwet’en, “the first people of the valley.” They are among more than twenty First Nations peoples who live in what is now known as British Columbia.

Many would like to boast of having “discovered” this land of such incredible beauty, and some have. Even Buddhist monk explorers, according to the Imperial Library in Beijing, claimed to have discovered British Columbia in 449 BCE. If they did reach the west coast shores way back when, it is not nearly way-back-when enough to predate the Native cultures of the region—a compelling reason for them to be counted among the First Nations peoples of Canada.

The Wet’suwet’en are not coastal peoples, as are the Haida, the Tsimshian, the Nootka (Nuu-chah-Nulth), and the Kwakiutl. For thousands of years they have lived in the central interior of British Columbia—Ki, Kuz, Moricetown (Kya’h wiget), and Hagwilget. Their traditional territory includes the Skeena and Fraser watersheds—the migratory rivers for the Pacific salmon. It is a land that abounds with an incredible variety of flora and fauna that has sustained the Aboriginal peoples of the region.

The Wet’suwet’en come within the Athapaskan linguistic group, Aboriginal peoples living predominantly in British Columbia, the Yukon, and Northwest Territories, but also scattered throughout Alberta, Saskatchewan, and into northern Manitoba. The Athapaskan group covers an immense amount of real estate in the second largest country on earth. It is also the largest Aboriginal linguistic group in Canada. It includes the Beaver, Dakelh/Carrier, Chilcotin, Chipewyan, Dogrib, Hän, Hare, Kaska, Gwich’in/Kutchin, Tsuut’ina/Sarcee, Tsek’ene/Sekani, Slave, Tagish, Tahltan, and Tutchone.

The Wet’suwet’en way of life is characterized by respect, balance, and sharing between all creatures and all things, for in the eyes of the Creator they are all expected to live in harmony on Mother Earth.

Like other Aboriginal peoples of the Pacific Northwest, the Wet’suwet’en are divided into tribal groups and kinship units known as clans and houses. The clan system represents a set of beliefs and a relationship to the spirit of another being, such as the bear, the killer whale, the beaver, the grouse, the frog, or the fireweed.

Clans have Hereditary Chiefs who have been given special names that have been passed on from generation to generation, usually from the mother or the mother’s brother, but it is not a title

that is easily obtained. It must be earned by strength of character and exemplary deeds. Andrew George Sr. earned his mother's name, Tsaibesa, and the title of Hereditary Chief in this way, and Andrew Jr. will do the same. Each clan is led by one Hereditary High Chief, whose name is bestowed only upon those who demonstrate extraordinary knowledge, wisdom, leadership, and vision, as agreed to by consensus in the Feast Hall.

Feast! Ba'la'lahts

This book is named after the Wet'suwet'en feast, *denii ne'aas*, which means "people coming together." It is an appropriate title for a book that is not only about delicious things to eat, but also about the ways of a people, the spirit and strength of character that have enabled the Wet'suwet'en to survive for thousands of years, as exemplified so perfectly by the George family.

As with other Aboriginal peoples of the Pacific Northwest, a feast or potlatch is much more than just people coming together to share food. It is the defining ceremony of Wet'suwet'en culture—the forum where important matters are discussed and where consensus is reached and witnessed by the people in the Feast Hall. These matters could include such things as bestowing titles and rights to hunting, fishing, and trapping territories, or settling disputes among diverse parties. Everyone in the Feast Hall contributes to making decisions, and after an issue has been thoroughly deliberated upon, the point is eventually settled when the down from an eagle is sprinkled around, signifying that the matter is closed.

The mutually respectful, nonconfrontational nature of the feast helps make Wet'suwet'en society function smoothly and democratically. It also performs the function of a kind of living archives, whereby Wet'suwet'en history is passed on in the oral tradition of Aboriginal peoples.

Today a Feast Hall is usually the community centre, but in the old days it was a special long house in Wet'suwet'en communities.

A feast can be called for various purposes, usually by the Head Chief of a host clan, or in some cases by a person who carries a name. Since the homeland of the Wet'suwet'en is divided into traditional clan territories, an all-clan feast may be called to resolve questions of ownership or matters relating to territorial boundaries.

The most important gatherings are the funeral feast and the headstone feast. These are when names, titles, and ownership are transferred to the living. An awarded name differs from a birth name in that it is passed on from a deceased name-holder only after a person has displayed qualities of goodness and honour in life, and only after everyone agrees that the candidate warrants such a tribute. A name is also a responsibility to be nourished and cared for, until such time as it is ready once again to be passed on to a new guardian, because it is associated with the name and reputation of a clan and its territorial ownership.

When a name-holder passes away, a smoke party is held, where people are hired to take care of the funeral arrangements.

At a funeral feast of a name-holder two important functions take place. One is the communal grieving at the Feast Hall that helps ease the pain of the family and close friends of the person who has passed away. Also, if there is a suitable candidate, the recipient of the deceased's name is announced. Then, about a year later, the name, title, and territory of the deceased are passed on at a headstone feast. At this feast, money is collected to pay for the funeral costs and debts the deceased may have incurred. It is also an occasion where gifts of appreciation are given to those who participated in the work involved in conducting the funeral.

Upon receiving a name at a headstone feast (*kan gu*), the recipient must act out in dance and song the name he or she has been awarded. During the ceremony the new chief will be given button blankets, drums, rattles, and other regalia bearing the clan crest. The person receiving the name of a Hereditary High Chief will also receive a totem pole representative of the clans over which he or she has been granted guardianship.

For whatever reason it is called, a feast is usually presided over by a Hereditary High Chief and follows the same general pattern. The host clan issues invitations in person, through second parties or through the news media in the area. Guests gather outside the Feast Hall and, as they are announced, they are taken to their seats by a member of the host clan who knows the names and titles of the guests and is well versed in the protocol of the occasion.

The Feast Hall is arranged with the host clan's table at the centre and invited clans on long tables on three of the four sides of the hall. The High Chiefs sit at the middle of the long tables, backs to the wall, facing the host table. Their heirs sit across from them, and other clan chiefs and guests sit on either side of them.

The ceremony begins with a prayer and a warm welcome by the host clan. Following an abundant meal featuring salmon, seasonal wild game, bannock, berries, tea and coffee, the business of the feast is conducted. It includes statements by the hosts who have called the feast, and responses by the invited chiefs. Mutual respects are paid among the chiefs as the business at hand is conducted. Gifts are given to the guests, and may include such items as blankets, food, tools, and clothing. It is through the giving of gifts that the importance of the guests at the feast is recognized—their role as witnesses to the deliberations is appreciated in a tangible way. It is also important that guests accept their gifts in order to demonstrate appreciation for the hospitality offered. The Wet'suwet'en and other Aboriginal peoples of the Pacific Northwest are generous givers and grateful receivers.

Prayers and thanks are offered to conclude the ceremonies, and another feast comes to a close. And so the circle of Wet'suwet'en life continues.

The Salmon Harvest

The story of Aboriginal peoples in the Pacific Northwest, whether coastal or inland inhabitants, would be incomplete without reference to their kinship with salmon. Like all things, the salmon

is one of the Creator's children. All are interdependent inhabitants of Mother Earth, each here to make a contribution to the other so the Circle of Life can continue.

In Wet'suwet'en tradition, fishing can take on dangerous dimensions. There is no Tilley-hatted television host in a \$40,000 boat with a high-powered motor and a sonar system pitching the adventure of spin-casting to armchair fishermen. This is the real thing, demanding great strength, dexterity, courage, and nerves of steel.

The salmon harvest takes place from mid-June to mid-September. The various species include chinook, sockeye, coho and pink salmon, and steelhead trout. The salmon, in their annual ritual of migration to their spawning grounds in quiet streams, courageously fight their way up the watersheds of the great Skeena and Fraser Rivers that etch their way through Wet'suwet'en territory. The banks are rough and rocky; in some places the rivers run through deep, steep canyons.

These are the fast, furious, and unforgiving waters from which the Wet'suwet'en harvest the salmon, armed with thirty-two-foot gaff poles fitted with hooks or the more modern dip-nets. As the salmon swim upriver, leaping up the fish ladders in the rapids, the men gaff or net them—many weighing as much as forty pounds—and run up the banks or canyon walls to deposit their catch. The feat is repeated until enough salmon are caught to feed everyone and provide for the winter.

Out of respect, the traditional Wet'suwet'en method of harvesting salmon guarantees that no more will be taken than is absolutely necessary. In the same vein, a clan will harvest only what they need from the waters or the land in their designated territory, and let the rest pass through. These practices ensure there will always be enough for others on this earth, and for future generations. There is a traditional saying attributed to Aboriginal peoples in the Pacific Northwest that speaks volumes about their belief systems and values: "We do not inherit the land from our ancestors, we borrow it from our grandchildren."

Some of the catch is eaten fresh. Most is dried, smoked, or salted for the winter months, for feasts, gifts, or payment. Nothing is wasted. Every part of the fish is used: the highly nutritious and delicious flesh and the calcium-rich bones are prepared in a great variety of tantalizing ways, many of which are to be found in the pages of *A Feast for All Seasons*.

In the old days salmon and other products indigenous to the region were used as currency in trade between Wet'suwet'en and other nations of the Pacific Northwest. Trade items from the coastal peoples could include clams, eulachons, seaweed, halibut, and *swinack*, a Native type of caviar. These goods would be exchanged for inland products—smoked or cured moose, venison and mountain goat and tanned hides. The trade routes were known as "grease trails" after the eulachon, a fish so rich in oil that when lit, it flames—the reason it is also known as the candlefish.

Bannock: The Native Staff of Life

If there is one food product common to virtually all Aboriginal peoples in Canada in one form or another, it is bannock, a bread for all seasons.

Originally it was an oatmeal or barley flatbread—*bannach* in Gaelic—brought over from Scotland by the fur traders, hunters, trappers, and adventurers of the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies. They introduced it to Native peoples and it became a staple of company men and their Indian guides and wives on their onerous treks through the Canadian wilderness. Bannock was the ideal food for the trail. It had few ingredients, was very easy and quick to make, and was substantial and nourishing for the travel-weary and hungry at breakfast, midday, and evening meals.

Over the past three hundred years it has been adopted as a Native staff of life by Aboriginal peoples from Truro to Tofino to Tuktoyaktuk, and all places in between. Many tales are told and even jokes are made about its preparation—on the trail, in the kitchen, out on the tundra, on the *sinaaq* ("ice floe edge" in Inuktitut, the language of the Inuit peoples). Its mouth-watering aroma will be sensed anywhere there's a fire, a skillet—or even a stick when an Aboriginal "pogo" is on the menu.

As will be seen in *A Feast for All Seasons*, bannock is a bread of incredible versatility, the only limitation on various styles for various occasions being the creativity of the baker. Only a few bannock recipes are included in these pages, but it could easily command an entire cookbook of its own.

No one knows bannock better or boasts more about who makes the best than Native hunters, trappers, and prospectors. And Andrew George Sr., a hunter/trapper/pro prospector who has been making bannock in the bush for most of his seventy-ish years, tells the story of bannock this way:

For generations we Wet'suwet'en trapped, hunted, fished, and picked berries. We lived off the land and did not depend on any government. We were self-governing in our land in the true sense of the word. When we travelled the trails, all we packed were the necessities, especially flour, baking powder, salt, and lard for bannock—and tea, of course.

Here is how to make bannock over an open fire: First, for safety, build your fire by the water or areas where there is no grass. This is very important, for we must always protect our beautiful Mother Earth. Put the water on to boil for tea and make camp. Then mix the flour, salt, baking powder, and water together in a tin bowl.

Put some lard in the frying pan over the fire to melt and get it hot. Pat the bannock dough pieces into little thin cakes and place them in the pan to fry until they are golden brown. Another way is to put the whole dough in the pan and press it out at the edges so that it's about an inch-and-a-half thick. Then sit it over the heat to brown the bottom a bit

so it won't sag. Then prop the pan up with a stick so the bannock is facing the fire and bake it, turning it every so often so that it cooks evenly. These methods of cooking bannock are pretty universal among Native people across Canada and are even taught to white people whose jobs take them out on the land—geologists, conservation officers, prospectors, and the like.

I have to tell you a story about the white man and bannock in the early days.

Back then, Native people would see a white man out on the land getting ready to make his meal. If he didn't have a frying pan he would make up the bannock batter and throw it on the hot coals of a campfire. Then when he figured it was baked he would just take it off and blow the ashes from it. Why he didn't wrap it around a stick and cook it over the fire like some Native people do is beyond me.

He must have been in an awful hurry for a feed of bannock and not care much about the charcoal around his mouth. Like I say, you can make bannock just about any way you want, but that one has to take the cake!

—Andrew George Sr. (Tsaibesa)

Wild Rice: Man-o-min

In the Ojibwa language the word *man-o-min* derives from *Manitou* (the great Spirit) and *meenun* (delicacy). In English it is wild rice, but really it is a grain—the only wild cereal crop in Canada.

True wild rice is indigenous to northwestern Ontario, southwestern Manitoba, and northern Minnesota, where it grows primarily in the shallows of lakes and rivers. It also grows in the cold lakes of Saskatchewan, the largest source of natural wild rice today.

Wild rice has been harvested by Native peoples in northwestern Ontario for more than 2,500 years. Traditionally, it held sacred status among the Ojibwa, and harvest time—late September to early October—was an occasion for families and friends to socialize, celebrate, and give thanks to the Great Spirit for this wonderful gift. The early method of harvesting was to manoeuvre a canoe through the wild rice stands, and with sticks or paddles sweep the tall grass-like stalks inside the canoe so the grain would separate and drop to the bottom. Then the green rice was brought to shore, roasted to a shiny brownish black over an open fire, and placed in blankets or baskets and tossed in the air so the wind could blow away the husks.

Today the grain is cultivated in rice farms in some areas of the United States and Canada, but authentic wild rice is much larger, more flavourful and generally more nutritious than its commercial counterpart. True wild rice is one of Mother Earth's most perfect foods—high in fibre, low in fat, cholesterol-free, and rich in minerals and the B vitamins. It has only 70 calories per half-cup serving. It also has a comforting chewy texture and a delicate nutty flavour. A bonus is that when cooked, a grain of natural wild rice expands as much as five times—a little goes a very long way.

Authentic wild rice, because of its flavour, nutritional value, versatility—and mystique—is earning a growing international reputation as the caviar of grains. It is featured in *A Feast for All Seasons* because it is one of Andrew's favourite accompaniments to many of his delicious creations.

The recipes in *A Feast for All Seasons* are categorized under the components of our world—the waters, the earth, the land, and the skies. Seafood and fish from the waters; fruits, vegetables, and grains from the earth; deer, moose, and rabbit from the land, and ducks, geese, and ptarmigan from the skies. This is a neat and logical organization that will help the reader find recipes to experience.

But we had another reason for putting the book together in this manner. We wanted to pay our respects to Mother Earth and to each of the sources from which She offers Her bounties. For us it is a natural progression from the bottom up, so to speak. From the depths of the waters, through the earth, above to the land and up into the skies, where one day we will all face the Creator. If we have lived a life of honour and goodness toward each other, and we have respected all creatures and all things in our journey, we will meet with the Creator's approval.

So as you go through *A Feast for All Seasons*, don't just think of it as a book of wonderful, inspired recipes, but also enjoy the journey with us. As you walk in our moccasins, respect each recipe as a gift from Mother Earth and a blessing from the Creator.

It will add a new dimension to your reading and dining experience.

So'h ga nec kewh dalht! Have a good meal!

The Seasons

For Aboriginal peoples, the seasons hold special significance. They signal transition, and each has its own special message for all creatures and all things within the waters and the earth, on the land and in the skies.



The yawning autumn, the sleep of winter, the awakening of spring, and the dance of summer—the evening, the night, the morning, and the afternoon of our eternity—are like signposts on our journey. So are infancy, adolescence, maturity, and old age, the four directions, and the four colours.

We respect the stages of our growth, the guideposts that point our way, the shadings that give us beauty and perspective, and the messengers of change that are the seasons. The Creator tells us we must be prepared to accept their blessings and sometimes their sorrows, for all are part of the Circle of Life.

In this section of *Feast for All Seasons* we want to share some menus you can prepare that celebrate autumn, winter, spring, and summer. Each recipe in the seasonal menus is found in its representative section in the book, either the Waters, the Earth, the Land or the Skies.

We invite you to prepare and enjoy them with your family and friends as the seasons come upon you. It is a nice way to create a special Aboriginal theme for a gathering centred around a season and to reflect upon the special significance it may hold for us.

Perhaps your guests could bring some small message of their own to explain what the season means to them as a way of adding to the celebration of your feast.

Autumn Feast Menus

The autumn is such a busy, lively time for the Wet'suwet'en. So much to do before the temperature drops and the snow flies. They go out on their territory, Now'h Yin'h Ta'h, to hunt moose, deer, elk, mountain goat, and wild fowl.

For a time there is much fresh meat to share, but it must also be prepared for use during the long, cold winter months. And so it is smoked and dried in the old way, and frozen and canned in the modern way. It is the same with the huckleberries and blueberries and soapallie, the root vegetables and the late corn. They too must be preserved for the winter so the people will have a balanced and healthy diet of meats and fruits and vegetables when fresh foods are in short supply.

There are few idle Wet'suwet'en hands in the autumn season, but it is also a good time to get together to enjoy the abundance of fresh food and the generosity of the Creator when the day's work is done.

Here are two of Andrew's favourite Autumn Feast menus typical of the season. Be sure to bring a good appetite with you when you prepare and enjoy these hearty creations.

MENU ONE

Wild Grouse Soup (page 136)

Venison Steak Diane (page 105)

Fiddleheads Wabanaki (page 69)

Baked Sweet Potato with Roasted Hazelnuts (page 74)

Habe Sta (Wet'suwet'en Fry-Bread) (page 81)

Stewed rhubarb

MENU TWO

Seafood Chowder Toody Ni (page 37)

Braised Moose Ribs (page 118)

Roasted herb potatoes

Fried cabbage

Corn bread

Poached crab apples

Winter Feast Menus

When the pure white snow dresses Now'h Yin Ta'h in its finest winter coat with its evergreen fringes, the land takes on yet another beautiful hue.

It is supposed to be the slow season, and yet there is so much activity, so much to do. Of all the children of Mother Earth, only the bear sleeps the long sleep. The rest continue their quest for food and their struggle for survival.

Out on the territory Andrew Sr. and his sons pursue the fox, the marten, and the lynx to contribute to their livelihood. They hunt the winter rabbit and grouse, and fish through the ice for trout and ling cod as welcome sources of fresh food. Of course there is much wood to be split, for fuel and cooking. The territory is such a cold place in winter.

But the homes of Tsaibesa and Gihl Lakh Khun are warm and comforting and friendly. Their kitchen wood stoves chatter their nonstop staccato crack and pop and hiss, morning, noon, and night.

Always on top of them is a pot of simmering soup and a kettle at the ready for tea.

From their hot, dry ovens the ever-present smell of baking bannock tantalizes all who enter the room.

Freshly laundered tea towels with the wonderful outdoor smell hang on racks at the side of the stove. They feel so warm to the touch when it is time to dry the dishes.

The large scrubbed wooden table in the centre of the room is an affable host, welcoming family and friends to sit together in its well-worn comfortable chairs, to talk, to tell stories, to laugh.

Wet'suwet'en kitchens are symphonies of sounds and sights, havens of lip-smacking tastes and inviting aromas that are especially heightened and pleasing in winter.

The dishes Andrew presents in these traditional Winter Feast menus are delicious and satisfying.

MENU ONE

Wild Rabbit Soup (page 124)

Half-Dried Salmon (page 45)

Parsley Potatoes (page 75)

Boiled mixed greens (turnip, beet tops)

Deep-Fried Bannock (page 82)

Huckleberry and apple crumble

MENU TWO

Wild Duck and Winter Vegetable Soup
(page 137)

Aboriginal Mixed Grill (page 121)

Boiled cabbage and root vegetables

Wild Rice and Mushrooms (page 71)

Fresh baked yeast rolls

Fresh squeezed huckleberries

Spring Feast Menus

The fireweed is first to peek through the melting snow and herald the arriving season. It is time to stretch, yawn one last time, and waken to the fresh, noisy spring.

We hear the honking of the endless flights of Canada geese coming home from their winter vacations, the stirring of the animals in the bush, the roar of the rivers made more furious by the spring runoff, the ear-splitting crack of spring ice.

In Now'h Yin'h Ta'h the long winter has finally passed, and thanks are given for all that it has offered the Wet'suwet'en. Life can now begin another cycle. The spring rains quench the thirst of the trees and plants and wildflowers. As their boughs, branches, and stems sway gently in the drying wind, they sprout their foliage and the tapestry of the season becomes vibrantly colourful once again.

This is a good time to catch the spring whitefish and trout, to hunt the blue grouse and beaver. Soon it will be time to harvest the wild spring vegetables and herbs—celery, garlic, and onions. And how the children love the sweet sap of the jack pine!

Andrew's Spring Feast menus reflect the spirit and flavour of Wet'suwet'en life during this wonderful time of year.

MENU ONE

Boiled Herring Roe on Kelp (page 58)

Stuffed Moose Heart with Gravy (page 120)

Oven roasted potatoes

Mixture of root vegetables

Tsaibesa's Bannock (page 78)

Saskatoon pie

MENU TWO

Steamed Clams with Eulachon Butter (page 60)

Baked Halibut on Rice with Seaweed (page 52)

Dilled carrots

Fresh whole wheat rolls

Cold wild cranberry soup

Summer Feast Menus

In the valleys and meadows the warm summer sun bathes and nourishes every berry and blade of grass, and the gentle summer rain cleanses and refreshes all creatures and things in Wet'suwet'en territory.

First there are the rich, red wild strawberries. After a time there are the deep purple Saskatoons and the delightful sweet-tart raspberries and blackberries to fill the baskets of the pickers to overflowing. In late summer the huckleberry, blueberry, and wild cranberry bushes present their juicy offerings, to eat fresh and to can for later on.

In summer, along canyons and rocky banks of the rivers of Kya'h wiget and Hagwilget, strong, fearless Wet'suwet'en with long gaff poles and nets scoop large fish from the fast, foamy waters. With luck there will be sockeye and chinook and coho and steelhead. The salmon harvest is in full swing in Now'h Yin'h Ta'h. Some of the catch will be eaten fresh and the rest will be dried or smoked or canned for another time. The drying racks and smoke houses are full and the aroma of salmon permeates the territory.

It is the best time to cook outdoors, over a campfire or a barbecue. So many of Andrew's recipes in *A Feast for All Seasons* can be cooked this way, and his Summer Feast menus are no exception.

MENU ONE

Venison Consommé (page 96)

Pacific Salmon and Atlantic Fiddlehead Stir-Fry (page 41)

Fresh baked rolls

Corn bread

Taas Guz (Cold Huckleberry Soup) (page 88)

MENU TWO

Barbecued Oysters (page 63)

Rabbit Stew (page 125)

Fresh crusty rolls

Upsidedown blueberry cake



FROM THE WATERS

The creatures from the waters—the ocean, the lakes, the rivers, and streams—have been instrumental in shaping the lives of Aboriginal peoples of the Pacific Northwest. From the beginning these foods have been available to them in great abundance, permitting a less nomadic existence than, say, that of the Cree, Blackfoot, and Métis Nations, whose survival depended on the buffalo herds that roamed freely over the vast Canadian prairies and respected no borders. It was a way of life that gave rise to the tipi, a light, portable, and quickly assembled “house” that accommodated their families as they pursued their sustenance.

The coastal peoples, on the other hand, were able to set up permanent communities and build permanent homes, called long houses. These were fairly large buildings made from cedar logs, with cedar shingle roofs. Each long house would accommodate a clan, with as many as five families.

In summer the Wet'suwet'en would travel downriver to Hagwilget and Kya'h wiget to harvest the salmon and preserve it for the winter months. In the old days it took Andrew's grandparents, Gisdewe and Tsabesa, and their families at least five days by horse and wagon to make their way from Beewini Bin (Owen Lake) to Hagwilget to get their salmon.

The recipes in “From the Waters” are only a sample of some of the foods enjoyed by the peoples of the Pacific Northwest.

Salmon Soup Wet’suwet’en

4 cups (1 L) fish stock or water

¼ lb (125 g) salmon roe

1 lb (500 g) fresh Pacific salmon, cubed

½ lb (250 g) potato, diced

1 stalk celery, diced

1 medium onion, diced

Sea salt and pepper to taste

Pinch curry powder

1 bay leaf

Dry seaweed (p. 64) for garnish

This is a traditional soup of the Aboriginal peoples of the Pacific Northwest. As with so many traditional recipes I have added a few contemporary twists. After all, one of the reasons Aboriginal peoples have survived for thousands of years is that we have been able to adapt to changing times while maintaining our traditional values. The same holds true for our foods.

You will notice I insist on Pacific salmon in this recipe. My Olympic team mate and friend Bryan Sappier may think differently, but that is only because he doesn’t know what real salmon tastes like. (He is from the Malecite Nation in New Brunswick).

Sorry, Bryan, friends are friends, but when it comes to salmon . . . ! Actually, you can use the other stuff . . . if you really have to.

In a large soup pot, bring stock to a simmer.

Heat salmon roe in a small saucepan and add to soup stock.

Add salmon, potato, celery, onion, salt, pepper, curry powder, and bay leaf.

Bring to boil. Simmer over low heat until potatoes are just tender. Discard bay leaf.

Ladle into soup bowls and sprinkle with dry seaweed.

Serve with hot bannock.

Makes 4 servings.

Seafood Chowder Toody Ni

8 cups (2 L) fish stock or water

½ cup (125 mL) bacon fat or butter

1 medium onion, diced

1 stalk celery, diced

4 cloves garlic, crushed

1 bay leaf

½ cup (125 mL) all-purpose flour

¼ lb (125 g) potato, diced

1 medium carrot, diced

½ green pepper, diced

½ lb (175 g) fresh clams

½ lb (175 g) salmon, cubed

½ lb (175 g) red snapper, cubed

Salt and pepper to taste

½ cup (125 mL) (approx.) whipping cream

This rich and delicious chowder was a favourite with customers at my Toody Ni Grill. It can be a meal in itself with bannock, though it is also great as a soup course in a full dinner—provided you don’t get too carried away with the serving size. Serve a small bowl or cupful as one course in a wonderful Native feast for all your guests.

You can find seaweed at many fish markets and some specialty stores.

In a large saucepan, bring fish stock to a boil.

In a large heavy soup pot over medium-high heat, heat bacon fat or butter. Sauté onion, celery, garlic, and bay leaf until onions are transparent.

Stir in flour and cook, stirring, 2 minutes. (The result is what chefs call a roux.) Slowly add hot stock to the roux, stirring well to prevent lumps. Bring to a simmer.

Add potato, carrot, and green pepper; simmer until vegetables are tender.

Add clams, salmon, and red snapper. Cook over low heat until fish is cooked through and tender, about 10 minutes. Discard bay leaf. Season with salt and pepper.

Remove from heat and stir in just enough cream to turn the chowder white.

Makes 10 to 12 servings as a starter, 6 to 8 as a main course.

Fish Stock

4 lbs (2 kg) bones of whitefish, halibut, sole, turbot, etc.

5 qts. (5 L) cold water

2 medium onions, thinly sliced

½ cup (125 mL) chopped mushrooms

½ bunch parsley stalks

1 bay leaf

12 peppercorns, crushed

1 tsp (5 mL) fennel seeds

Juice of 1 lemon

Fish stock has many uses—in soups, chowders, sauces, and for making the Court Bouillon (p. 39) for poaching fish. Here are two ways I prepare fish stock. The first is a little bit simpler, but both produce great results.

Remember: always use cold water in any stock you make.

Method #1

Wash fish bones and place in a large heavy soup pot. Add water and bring to a boil. Skim foam off the surface of the stock.

Add onions, mushrooms, parsley stalks, bay leaf, peppercorns, fennel seeds, and lemon juice. Simmer, uncovered, for 30 to 45 minutes, skimming surface occasionally.

Strain stock through a fine sieve.

Stock will keep for at least a week in the fridge. Or you can boil the strained stock until it starts to thicken, about 3 to 4 hours. Pour into a large baking or roasting pan and chill a few hours until set. Cut gel into cubes, wrap in plastic wrap, and freeze. Whenever you need fresh stock, take a cube from the freezer and dilute with hot water. (You can freeze any stock this way.)

Method #2

In a large, heavy soup pot, sauté onions, parsley flakes, bay leaf, peppercorns, and fennel seeds in 1 tbsp (10 mL) butter until onion is transparent.

Add a squirt of fresh lemon juice, fish bones, and mushrooms. Add water and bring to a simmer; simmer, uncovered, for 30 to 45 minutes, skimming the surface occasionally.

Strain, cool, and store as above.

Makes 5 qts. (5 L).

Court Bouillon for Poaching Fish

½ large carrot, thinly sliced

½ large onion, thinly sliced

1 stalk celery, thinly sliced

6 black peppercorns, crushed

5 parsley stalks

1 bay leaf

1 tbsp (15 mL) salt

¾ cup (175 mL) white wine vinegar

8 cups (2 L) cold fish stock or water

A much more flavourful and professional way of poaching fish than simply using water.

In a large heavy soup pot, place carrot, onion, celery, peppercorns, parsley stalks, bay leaf, salt, vinegar, and fish stock. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer, uncovered, for 20 minutes.

Add the fresh fish to be poached and simmer until fish is tender, allowing 5 to 8 minutes per pound (500 g).

Makes 8 cups (2 L).

Broiled Salmon

- 4 6-oz (175-g) salmon fillets
- 2 tsp (10 mL) vegetable oil
- 1 tsp (5 mL) lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

After a long day at work, this is a very quick and simple way to enjoy a meal. Serve with rice or potatoes and your favourite vegetable.

Preheat broiler about 10 minutes.
Rub both sides of salmon with oil, lemon juice, salt, and pepper.
Broil 7 to 8 minutes each side.

Makes 4 servings.

Pacific Salmon and Atlantic Fiddlehead Stir-fry

- 1 2-lb (1-kg) fresh Pacific salmon, skin and bones removed
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp (5 mL) minced gingerroot
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) vegetable oil
- 1½ lbs (750 g) fresh or frozen fiddleheads
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) white wine
- ½ cup (125 mL) teriyaki sauce
- 1 tsp (5 mL) cornstarch

In this dish, east meets west twice, if you get my meaning. It is fantastic!

Cut salmon into bite-sized pieces. Toss with garlic, ginger, salt, and pepper.

Over high heat, heat oil in a wok or large skillet to smoking point. Add salmon; stir-fry until lightly browned. Add fiddleheads; stir-fry for another minute or two.

Add wine and cook, stirring frequently, until wine is reduced by half. Stir in teriyaki sauce.

In a small bowl, blend cornstarch with 3 tbsp (50 mL) water; add to wok and stir until thickened.

Serve over a bed of wild or steamed rice.

Makes 4 servings.