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***The Northern Food Industry Is Snowballing;
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ARCTIC FOODS

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THE NORTHERN FOOD INDUSTRY IS SNOWBALLING

By Lyn Hancock



Whatever name you call them, northern or country or Arctic foods are evolving into what could be a \$150 million industry in the Northwest Territories and with unusual speed and enthusiasm.

One of the most enthusiastic promoters of a northern food industry is Jeanne Dube (Madame Dee Ltd.) of Fort Smith. As early as 1978 she was lobbying the Department of Economic

Development and Tourism to educate the general public to eat more wild meat, to build a processing plant in Fort Smith to can muskox, buffalo, caribou and reindeer as well as products of the trapline: lynx, beaver, and muskrat. Meanwhile, she invited tourists into her home to taste her products; she ran

workshops in wild meat processing; she dried, smoked and canned her own wild meat; and she developed a recipe book for northern foods and her own spice formula which she describes as "really something."

Now, ten years later, Jeanne Dube has a contract with the Department of Economic Development and Tourism to visit Yellowknife, Inuvik, Cambridge Bay, Rankin Inlet, Iqaluit, Fort Smith and Fort Simpson to show chefs and various interest groups how to handle, preserve, prepare and serve game meats



86, was a smashing success with both visitors and media, serving such dishes as Egg McMuskox, muskox burgers, Arctic char, northern greens and drinks spiked with 10,000-year-old ice.

The Government of the Northwest Territories realizes that a good way to a tourist's pocketbook is through his stomach. One-and-a-half million people visited the Northwest Territories Expo Pavilion. In subsequent years, the numbers of tourists to the territories have dramatically increased and a large part of their experience is seeking out

northern foods. Hotel chefs across the Arctic have increased the northern component of their menu.

Kamotiq Inn in Iqaluit gears much of its menu to natives travelling between settlements. Bill Mackenzie reports that in addition to the usual muskox and caribou steak and burgers, northern prawns with mint sauce, and northern scallops with fettucine, Kamotik Inn serves cold plates of diced muktuk, char and caribou with lemon and soya sauce and a combination cold plate of frozen diced muktuk, char and caribou served

and other products.

Interest in producing and marketing northern foods has snowballed in the last few years. First, Team Canada came second in a world culinary arts festival with such delicacies as Muskox with Wild Rice and Banks Island Crab Timbale. Then, Icicles Restaurant, in the Northwest Territories Pavilion at Expo

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Yellowknife Inn's new menu for 1989 features MuskoX Rossini, a muskoX filet topped with pate de foie gras and doused in Madeira sauce. Chef Patrick Kane doesn't believe in marinating wild meat to disguise a gamey flavour. His motto is "Present it as it is."

Yellowknife Inn has a well deserved reputation for its innovative presentation of northern foods. Kane is constantly experimenting to make his dishes a delight to the eye as well as the palate.

Chef Jacques Rodrigue of the Explorer Hotel in Yellowknife also does not try to disguise the gamey flavour of wild meat. He uses rosemary in the red wine sauce that accompanies his hip of caribou because rosemary keeps the wild taste. Because caribou and muskoX tend to dry out, he wraps bacon around these meats to retain moisture.

One of Chef Rodrigue's showiest dishes is Char Wellington, done in puff pastry stuffed with spinach and a duxelle of mushrooms. Like other chefs, he



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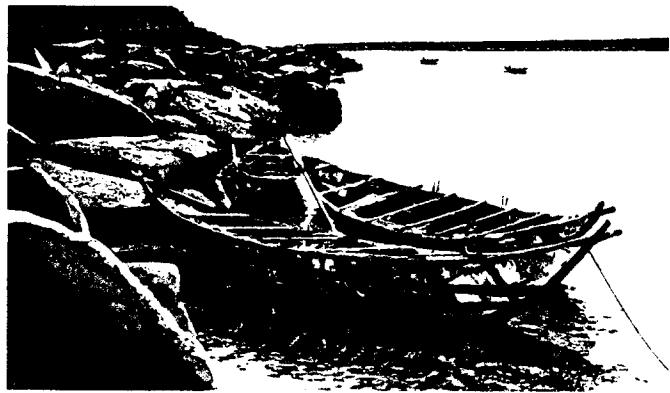
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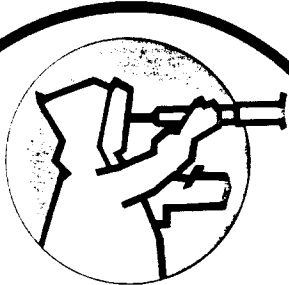
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notices an increased demand for northern foods.

"Bye the Sea," the Arctic Foods Restaurant in Apex, near Iqaluit, which opened on September 25th, 1988, is probably the only restaurant in the Northwest Territories to serve only northern foods. Owner Bob Crann says he changes his menu weekly depending on availability. "We buy shrimp from Greenland, scallops from Pangnirtung, caribou and muktuk from Iqaluit, char from Pangnirtung and Arctic Bay. We also serve Arctic hare and muskox when we can get them. Products are served alone or in European-style, like caribou lasagne or shrimp and scallop fettucine."

The Government of the Northwest Territories is strongly supportive of the recent interest in a northern food industry. It sees the value for tourism, a chance to create local employment and ways to provide a cheaper and more nutritious diet for northerners, as well as earn export dollars in the south. In 1987 and 1988 it hosted a northern foods conference and several northern foods workshops, it has paid for consultants to develop new products, it has provided seed money to begin new businesses, it has tested markets and trained people. It will be providing more money in 1989. The main thrust will be to serve local and territorial needs first and the gourmet export market second. Consumers in the Northwest Territories spend \$130 million annually on food items imported from southern Canada. The government wants an increased use of northern foods (presently \$70 million) to reduce the amount spent on imports.

Northern foods will only be sold commercially if there is a proven surplus. All communities now have hunting quotas, although in keeping with the desire to increase northern foods consumption (within sustainable yield limits) many hunting quotas have been increased. It is estimated that there is a surplus of 165,000 pounds of caribou meat, 33,000 pounds of muskox meat, 300,000 pounds of reindeer meat, as well as substantial surplus volumes of trout, whitefish and Arctic char. Shrimp, scallops and Greenland turbot are now being marketed and mussels, sea cucumbers, seal, whale and Arctic hare are being considered. Although not indigenous, production of pigs, poultry, dairy and beef cattle is being expanded to further lessen dependence on southern imports.

David Ladd of Science Systems Research and Development is an enthusiastic Ontario agrologist who has been hired by the Department of

Economic Development and Tourism to suggest and develop other products. His aim is to enhance the natural resources of the Northwest Territories through value-added processing. "In other words, produce more of what you have by using an agrarian technology. In the wild, perhaps only 20% of ptarmigan eggs produce adult birds. But if we collect 1000 eggs and raise them in captivity, production may be enhanced to produce 800 adult birds.

"The amount of food potential in the Northwest Territories is fantastic. Northern foods have a magic about them that people, especially down south, are prepared to pay for. Just compare, for example, the connotations and attractiveness of Wild Berry Jelly to Kraft Strawberry Jam."

Many of Ladd's ideas are novel but they make sense. He sent a Black Forest and Siberian wild boar hybrid to test a Rankin Inlet winter. This hairy pig species is designed to live outside in temperatures that reach 40 below. When processed the pork commands \$20 a kg on Toronto specialty shelves.

Another meat that fascinates him is seal. "You owe it to the animal to prepare it properly. It's hard to ruin beef but it's easy to ruin seal meat."

One of the people most looking forward to Madame Dube's visit to Fort Simpson is Kevin MacKay, of the Nahanni Inn. His story illustrates some of the problems of expanding the northern food industry, despite the enthusiasm of all those wanting to participate in it and the proven demand by tourists and southerners.

"I came north from a trendy Toronto restaurant with the idea of bringing nouvelle cuisine to the natives, to promote northern foods and to put Nahanni Inn on the map, but I've had to adapt a lot," he laughed. "First, locals are not too adventurous in their food choices. The tourists will choose muskox but the locals will stick to beef. Now if you put a familiar word with it, like muskox burger or our Nahanni clubhouse sandwich which features caribou, it is more popular.

"The second problem is getting a supply of northern foods. You either can't get them or you can't get them when you need them. We ran out of char a month ago. Or you can't get accompaniments."

MacKay says he is more likely to get reindeer from Toronto than from Fort Simpson. Chef Jacques Rodrigue agrees that supplies are inconsistent. "I sometimes have to get my char from Edmonton rather than the Northwest Territories. Often the south gets precedence



over the North."

Paul Marks is a sausage maker by trade. For three-and-a-half years he was manager of northern foods outlet Ulu Foods in Inuvik but has now started his own company called Arctic Meats.

He buys caribou and muskox from local hunters and sells the meat to restaurants in the N.W.T. but his ultimate goal is to sell wild meat outside the Northwest Territories.

He puts the problem forcefully. "Nobody can sell meat outside the territories unless it has been federally inspected. We were able to sell muskox to the Expo pavilion in 1986 because we had a federal inspector on the slaughter site — Banks Island — when the muskox

were being killed. But we couldn't sell caribou because it was more difficult to get it federally inspected.

"We must have our meat federally inspected to protect the public. The N.W.T. is unique in that nowhere else in Canada can a native hunter or holder of a general hunting licence go out on the land, get meat and handle it any way he wants, then expect a store to sell it commercially. Yet, northern meats are probably still better than the hormone, drug-ridden, polluted, feedlot grown animals of the south."

Despite the slow progress in solving problems of a consistent supply of some



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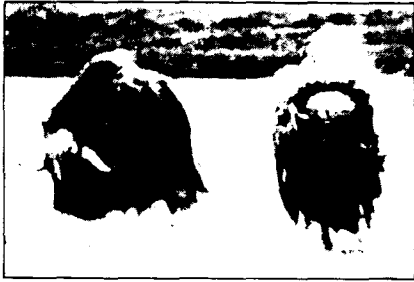
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northern foods, and the lack of government health standards for the export of muskox and caribou (in early 1989 a committee will be struck to deal with this question), both government officials and private entrepreneurs are having considerable success in obtaining and marketing other northern foods, particularly seafoods from the Baffin region.

"We're really excited about the northern shrimp fishery," says Larry Simpson, Supervisor of Renewable Resource Development of the Department of Economic Development, in Iqaluit. "This is the first time Baffin native groups have been able to get into it. The highest catches have been off Resolution Island, only twelve miles from South Baffin Island. Thirty Inuit are now trained as fishermen with a total income from the industry of \$1 million. Historically, the catch was landed in Greenland and Newfoundland because Baffin has no easy ice-free port, but we're doing a study right now to see if an onshore processing facility for shrimp and other fish is feasible."

Two of the most successful projects on Baffin Island are the winter turbot fishery and the summer scallop fishery run by P and L Services (owned by Peter Panayuk and Loase Anilniliak) out of Pangnirtung. "There's an excellent

resource base in Cumberland Sound, reliable entrepreneurs, a good backhaul air rate and lots of plane connections to get the scallops to market," Simpson says.

Winter is the best time for turbot fishing. Long lines of baited hooks are laid on the sea bottom under the ice, then, two hours later, before Greenland sharks get to them, the lines of turbot are hand cranked to the surface and brought by skidoos to land. "In the winter of 1988, First Air did a superb job flying out 15,000 lbs of filleted turbot on short notice. This winter, from January when the ice is firm till March, we are proposing a winter turbot fishery with a new company, Cumberland Sound Fishery Limited, whose principals include the local Co-op, P and L Services, the Hunters and Trappers Association and some of the better fishermen in the area. Fishermen are getting 70 cents a lb which is pretty good, and the industry should shortly be viable enough to operate without government subsidy, as is the case now."

After two years of test fishing and strong support by government, the scallop industry got off to a good start at the end of summer 1988. P and L Services' new boat, Tikagulik, had difficulty keeping up to demand. P and L Services

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the ice is kept separate from the processing area. We scrape this area down to the ice layer, then dig a second hole to get water, glaze the ice, prohibit skidoos, oil, and smoking so the fish remain uncontaminated. We take the fish from the nets alive, reject any dead fish, lay them out on the flooded process area where they freeze solid in ten minutes.

Then we dip them into the hole, pull them out and glaze twice more to preserve their quality. We were told by the fisheries inspector that the less breaking of the fins the better. So, we went all out, saving all the fins by laying each fish down on the ice, one at a time, and using cotton twine to tie each fin to the fish's belly. Next winter we'll start closer to March when the weather is more pleasant. Last February we spent five days out on the ice at 57 below, living in igloos."

All Baffin communities have some kind of meat cutting and processing facilities. Arctic Bay and Iqaluit will host meat cutting courses in 1989 so that fish and caribou steaks, patties and sausages may be produced for sale around Baffin Island and the Northwest Territories. "Compared to the food at the grocery store, wild meat is both more nutritious and cheaper. Caribou sells for \$2.50 lb, and fish for \$1.50 lb," says Larry Simpson.

"Seasonality of supply is of course one of the problems of the northern foods industry so we must educate people to expect it. We are encouraging people to store char for use in the off season. Iqaluit Enterprises have expanded their frozen storage space."

Simpson is also experimenting with other northern foods for commercial distribution: Arctic hare sausage, seal

and whale jerky. In October 1989 Simpson plans a fund-raising (\$30 a plate) Feast of Arctic Foods in Iqaluit. "We have developed ten recipe cards for char, turbot and caribou in revolving carousels for free distribution to stimulate a demand. We do product samples at the Bay in Iqaluit and at Tooniq Tyme we sell cups of seafood chowder at a nominal price."

Other exciting ideas being explored in the Baffin region are greenhouses in Pond Inlet and both greenhouses and hydroponics in Iqaluit.

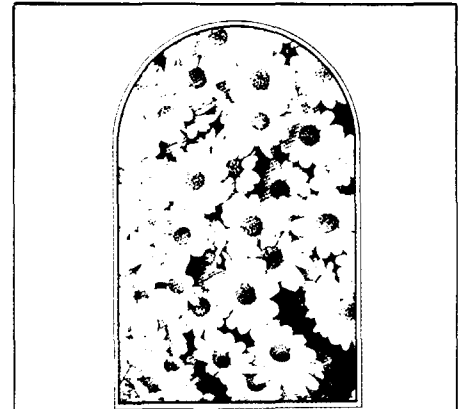
Bob Long is an Arctic foods development officer representing the Baffin

hired ten people to shuck the scallops by hand. The locals buy them in the shells, before they are shucked, at \$2 lb, but shucked they sell for \$7.95 lb in Pangnirtung, and \$11 lb in Iqaluit.

Meanwhile, the Department of Economic Development will test fish for Atlantic cod which grow very large (40 lbs) in west Cumberland Sound. And, at Sanikiluaq and adjacent Great Whale in Quebec, fishermen are test fishing for mussels, clams, sea cucumbers and sea urchins.

"It's new and it's exciting," says Simpson. "In the Igloolik area we're pushing winter char fishing. Getting char in summer is a nightmare but in winter, costs are lower, weather is more consistent, storage is no risk. In the 1988 winter we harvested 17,000 Arctic char of which 12,000 went to Winnipeg and 5,000 went to the Sea Food Outlet in Yellowknife. You have to work at losing money with winter char fishing. It's the most lucrative fishery in Canada. The fishermen get \$2.50 per lb, the best anywhere for a wild fishery. And it is sold for \$4.50 lb."

Brian Lacey, enthusiastic Economic Development Officer in Igloolik, will be extending the winter char fishery there for 1989 and trying a pilot project in Hall Lake near Hall Beach. He is proud of the compliments he and his fishermen received for the excellent condition of the char when they arrived in Winnipeg. "The area where the nets are put under



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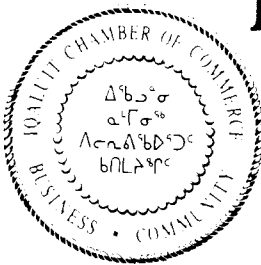
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Regional Council for all the hunters and trappers associations. He is concentrating on marketing seal products because the Baffin region has more seals than anywhere else in the Northwest Territories, and to counteract the damage done by the anti-sealing lobbyists. By January 1989, he should know the number of seals that can be taken on a commercial, sustainable yield base, the community infrastructure available to process seals, and the suggestions of the community as to what to do with them.

"We know we can do non-polluting

seal tanning for seal leather wallets and briefcases. There is a market for them and for traditional seal fur items too, despite Greenpeace."

The Baffin region seems to be trying everything: bottles of Arctic Water, Glacial Ice, eiderdown duvets from eider ducks at Sanikiluaq, reindeer transplanted to Resolution Island near the markets at Iqaluit.

Two successful entrepreneurs marketing several Baffin specialties are Jim Currie and Sandy Mongeau of Iqaluit Enterprises. "We only use the

best char from certain lakes near Pangnirtung and north of Broughton Island which have a certain colour and quality. The fishermen bring it to us by skidoo or send it by First Air. We started smoking fish for ourselves, then found people wanted to buy it. So in 1985, we bought a building in Iqaluit, a commercial smoker and started selling hickory smoked char to stores and restaurants. Now, we have enquiries from B.C., Japan, the Caribbean, Switzerland, Germany and even Greenland.

"We can't keep up to the demand. When we finish our upgrading to Department of Fisheries and Oceans standards, we will be licensed to export. Trouble is, we can only produce 400 lbs of finished product per week and one

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customer wanted a ton. At the moment we're selling char, muktuk, turbot, shrimp and scallops but we've also smoked whale and seal. Perhaps next we'll make caribou sausage."

Syd Kirwan, Director of Natural

Resources in Yellowknife, described what was happening in the northern foods industry for the rest of the Northwest Territories. "In the Keewatin, Kal's Country Foods in Rankin Inlet is out of business but another country foods outlet — Kakavik Fisher Foods — in Eskimo Point has started selling char and caribou. Hopefully, another store and a meat processing plant will be established in Baker Lake in a few months. Rankin Inlet exports 50,000 lbs of fish to Winnipeg in a year, but the processing plant there needs repair."

In Chesterfield Inlet about 4,000 lbs of ground caribou meat was distributed free as part of a test project to determine if a small scale meat packing plant was feasible in the Keewatin region. If the project is successful (people like caribou hamburgers and its price is competitive), then 10,000 lbs of caribou burgers can be processed and sold through the co-ops of the Keewatin.

"In the Arctic Coast region, the processing plant of Central Arctic Meats which opened in November 1987 is doing well and processes muskox, caribou, jerky, sausages — pepperoni and salami — as well as traditional cuts. They can do seal too. Everything is sold within the Territories now but they will be able to export out of the N.W.T. when their proposed portable abattoir is approved," said Kirwan.

"In Cambridge Bay, the Ikaluktutiak Co-op is still exporting summer-caught char — 100,000 lbs a year — as it has done now for 20 years. The catch goes to Winnipeg and then to the rest of Canada and the world. In 1987, they got \$6 lb for their char. The Cambridge Bay char industry has the best record in the N.W.T."

Pelly Bay, Gjoa Haven and Spence Bay have a combined char quota of 60,000 lbs which they harvest in the winter and sell to Yellowknife and Inuvik. Coppermine doesn't have a pro-

cessing facility yet but it does have a retail country foods outlet — Angonaipit Niovikvia — which buys from the Hunters and Trappers Associations and Central Arctic Meats.

Maz Huda, of Cambridge Bay, is another economic development officer who is enthusiastic about the northern foods industry. "Caribou is so much cheaper than chicken or beef. In Cambridge Bay we sell caribou roasts and steaks for \$9 kg, burgers for \$6 kg and stew meat for \$6 kg. Ribs, mind you, are \$35 a kg. Sausage meat is about \$12 a kg."

In Yellowknife and Fort Smith there is an increasing demand for northern foods. Yellowknife has North Country Foods, soon to move into the middle of town, and Sea Foods Outlet in Old Town. Fort Smith has the Hunters and Trappers Country Foods Outlet which hopes to sell wood bison. A game ranch for wood bison may be established soon in the Fort Smith area. The Government of the N.W.T. is encouraging the domestication of indigenous species to avoid the depletion of wild stocks, to guarantee uniform availability and lessen the chance of disease.

Commercial agriculture is to be expanded in the South Slave region around Hay River. Northern Poultry in Hay River, with its 50,000 hens, has helped to reduce the price of eggs in Yellowknife in recent years. Pine View Poultry (a joint venture of the Hay River Dene band and Cillitard of Edmonton) is presently building a barn to produce 1.2 million kg of poultry meat a year which is the estimated demand for the whole N.W.T. If the Canadian Chicken Marketing Agency approves, production will be expanded to three million kg. Frank Richardson of Northern Poultry is also building a Northern Pork operation to sell to Hay River and the surrounding region. An abattoir and a feed mill will also be built in Hay River.



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