

# A Welcoming Wilderness

## The Role of Wild Berries in the Construction of Newfoundland and Labrador as a Tourist Destination

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Article abstract

Wild berries have long been integral to Newfoundlanders' and Labradorians' food stores. Berry picking remains an important late summer and early fall activity, combining traditional, geographical knowledge with material culture, foodways and custom. Berries may also be Newfoundland and Labrador's most successful culinary tourism product to date, combining attributes of health, wilderness and resourcefulness. Whereas ethical and moral uncertainty or conviction precludes many tourists from trying seal products, and health concerns prevent the enjoyment of regional favorites such as fish and chips, berries offer visitors a window into local culture beyond reproach. Reifying the text and images of national and provincial tourist literature emphasizing the area's "outdoor nature product," the berries serve as an iconic image of a resourceful people intimately connected to a bountiful, welcoming wilderness.

## A WELCOMING WILDERNESS

### The Role of Wild Berries in the Construction of Newfoundland and Labrador as a Tourist Destination

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Newfoundland and Labrador's wild berries and their utilization in diverse locally made products are highly regarded. Reifying the text and images of national and provincial tourist literature, the berries serve as an iconic image of resourceful people living close to a bountiful, welcoming wilderness. In turn, this image fulfills middle and upper class expectations of "the folk" (Bessière 1998, 2001; Lofgren 2001; McKay 1994).<sup>1</sup> If the availability and prevalence of fried foods in Newfoundland and Labrador represent all that is wrong with contemporary North American food culture in the eyes of visitors to the province (Everett 2005), then wild berries must go far in tipping the scale to the good.<sup>2</sup>

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1. A shorter version of the article was presented at the 2006 annual meeting of the Folklore Studies Association of Canada. My thanks to all who offered comments and suggestions, and especially to Dr. Diane Tye. I am also indebted to Helen Cox, Rita and Cecil Davis, and Cathy and Allen Deyo for their crucial input. The J.R. Smallwood Foundation for Newfoundland and Labrador Studies funded the fieldwork upon which this article is based.
  2. In this article I will focus on the traditional and commercial uses of berries that have historically grown wild in the region, although some varieties are now cultivated. It is important to note, however, that the success of berry crops drawn from both managed and unmanaged stands has prompted trials of European cultivars such as Sea Buckthorn (Phinney 2004: 35). See also Davidson (1999: 708).

This article explores the role of these berries as culinary tourism products, from both the perspective of tourists, and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians working in various capacities in the tourism industry. The data examined for this study included electronic and print advertising, government and industry reports, Internet travelogues, survey and qualitative interview data, and tourist ephemera. The fieldwork for this project was conducted from 2002 to 2005, primarily during the province's tourism high season (June to October).

Berries in general are known to be high in vitamins such as C and A, and disease-preventing antioxidants like phenol and anthocyanin. They are low in calories and high in fiber. Their versatile nature facilitates their use in both savoury and sweet concoctions, as well as sensually appealing non-edibles such as candles, soaps, and other skin care products. Moreover, visitors to the province are much more likely to see a postcard or framed photograph of a pitcher of blueberries for sale in a gift shop than one of a plate of fish and chips. Many communities around the province have developed summer festivals around indigenous berries: the Humber Valley Strawberry Festival (held in Deer Lake) in July, blueberry festivals in Brigus and St. Georges, bakeapple festivals in Garnish (Newfoundland) and Forteau (Labrador) in August, and West St. Modeste's Partridgeberry Festival in September. All things considered, berries are elemental in the province's material tourism.

The berry is a low-risk culinary departure for many travelers, particularly those for whom the uncertainties of transportation, lodging, and sightseeing activities are challenge enough. Not only are edible berries fundamentally healthful, but even hitherto unknown (to visitors) varieties, such as partridgeberries and bakeapples, come in familiar shapes, sizes and colours.<sup>3</sup> When cast in a recognizable, agreeable form, previously forbidden varieties are eagerly consumed. Fellow guests at a bed and breakfast where I stayed in Grand Falls were delighted to find dogberry jam on the table, exclaiming, "Oh, I always thought dogberries were poisonous. I can't wait to try it!"<sup>4</sup> Similarly, in her on-line vernacular

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3. Bakeapples (also known as bog-apple, yellowberry and cloudberry, particularly in Scandinavia, and baked apple berry), for example, composed of large drupelets or pericarps, have a form similar to raspberries and blackberries. Partridgeberries (also called foxberry, redberry and cranberry in Canada, cowberry in England, and lingonberry in northern Europe) are a variety of cranberry.
  4. The participant-observation conducted for this project included staying at B&Bs across the province.

travelogue of a 2001 visit to Newfoundland,<sup>5</sup> Christine Ulicki describes how she and her husband

... stopped at local winery and sampled some fruit wines, and bought a couple of bottles. Found out that dogberries are bright orange things on mountain ash trees. We have one of those in our front yard, always thought they were poisonous. Guess not, cause they make wine out of them.

Tourists to the province who revealed that they had not tried any other regionally specific foods noted that they had, at least, had a partridgeberry dessert of some kind.

### **Berry Bounty**

The widespread acceptability of the province's berries may also be due to guidebook recommendations. The official web site of the Canadian Tourism Commission exalts the province's berries in its section entitled "Cuisine in Newfoundland and Labrador".

Sweet flavours come naturally in Newfoundland and Labrador. Visit the annual Blueberry Festival in the town of Brigus and you'll be treated to a blueberry themed bake-off, a pie-eating contest, and plenty of mouthwatering blueberry desserts. Make sure to stick around for the crowning of the winner of the Miss Blueberry Pageant,<sup>5</sup> and get your slice of the centrepiece of the festival, a massive blueberry pie. In nearby Forteau, the Bakeapple Festival in August celebrates the golden-coloured berries, also called cloudberry, which grow in abundance along the coast. Enjoy berry picking, baking contests and traditional song and dance. And a jar of bakeapple jam makes a souvenir that you'll savour for a long time (2004).

In one paragraph, a number of the province's traditions, both time-honoured and emergent, are presented to potential visitors: berry picking, musical expression, foodways, and food-related festivals. The berry is thus presented as a locus of touristic activity offering visitors a connection with local culture. Furthermore, they can take a symbol of

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5. I use the phrase vernacular travelogue, rather than the commonly used phrase internet travelogue to emphasize the interstitial nature of these online narratives that: 1) are technically public but perhaps not easily accessible or widely read; 2) adhere to certain traditions of travel writing but at the same time exhibit a high degree of individual creativity and aesthetic choice in both text and image; 3) share links with other hypertexts — personal, educational, and commercial, and 4) are marked by a high degree of ephemerality, as with many electronic texts.

such experiences home with them, in the form of jam, an aspect of berry commodification and (re)domestication that will be discussed in more detail later.

Frommer's, a travel guide publisher that also maintains an extensive web site, has long offered an annual edition covering Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and, as stated on the guide's cover, "the Best of Newfoundland and Labrador."<sup>6</sup> The first major section details "the best" leisure activities and attractions, including "spots for observing nature," "scenic drives," "picturesque villages," and "local dining" (Karr 2002: 3-9). In Nova Scotia, the traveler is directed to Digby scallops, rappie pie, and fresh lobster, also recommended for sampling in New Brunswick.<sup>7</sup> Prince Edward Island gets a nod for their mussels. For the best local dining in Newfoundland (Labrador is not specifically mentioned here), the tourist is pointed to berries.

The unforgivingly rocky and boggy soil of this blustery island resists most crops, but produces some of the most delicious berries you can imagine. Look for roadside stands in midsummer, or pick your own blueberries, strawberries, partridgeberries or bakeapples (Karr 2002: 9).

The fact that "delicious berries" can thrive in "unforgivingly rocky and boggy soil" renders them more precious, especially as, according to this guide, they are among the few edible plants that can grow locally.

Fodor's, a more upscale and conservative guidebook series, also waxes poetic regarding the province's berries. *Hostelcanada.com*, an online travel information and reservation service based in Ireland describes Newfoundland berries in its "Eating Out" section.

Another favourite among visitors to Canada are the wonderful array [of] Newfoundland berries on offer if you happen to come during the right season. Blueberries, strawberries and partridgeberries are just

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6. The 2004 tourist season marked the first year that Frommer's offered a guide exclusively for Newfoundland and Labrador. However, it is unclear how widely this guide was available, as visitors told me they had difficulty finding such guidebooks prior to arriving in the province.
  7. Although fresh lobster is available for purchase, both dockside and in restaurants throughout Atlantic Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are singled out by Frommer's as "the most productive lobster fisheries" (Curtis 2000: 7), apparently foregrounding quantity and contradicting the endorsement of Prince Edward Island lobster dinners later in the guidebook.

three of those to be found at roadside stands in midsummer but if you don't get to buy them from these makeshift vendors, try them on cakes and desserts in restaurants in the area (2004).

The site also recommends dim sum in Vancouver, Danish specialties in Saskatchewan, lobster in the Maritimes, and smoked meat in Montréal, clearly a highly selective list in light of the many foods and traditions influencing their production and presentation in Canada. Therefore, the highlighting of Newfoundland berries is all the more notable.

The emphasis on berries is longstanding in travel literature about the province. Hoping to inform English society about Newfoundland, John Mason penned *A Briefe Discourse of the New-found-land* in 1620. He noted:

The Countrie fruites wild, are cherries small, whole groaues of them Filberds good, a small pleasant fruite, called a Peare, Damaske Roses single very sweet, excellent Straberries, and Hartleberries with abundance of Rasberries, and Gooseberries somewhat better than ours in *England* [emphasis in original].

Also in that year, Richard Whitbourne declared:

Then haue you there faire Strawberries red and white, and as faire Raspass berries, and Goose berries, as there be in *England*; as also multitudes of Bilberries, which are called by some, Whortes, and many other delicate Berries (which I cannot name) in great abundance.

There are also many other fruits, as small Peares, sowre Cherries, Filberds, &c. And of these Berries and fruits the store is there so great, that the Marineres of my Ship and Barkes company, haue often gathered at once, more then halfe an hogshead would hold; of which diuers times eating their fill... (6)

Making arguments for continued economic activity on the island, authors Mason and Whitbourne emphasize the bounty of wild berries with strikingly similar statements. Moreover, they point out that the fruit is just as good as, or even better than that native to England.

In 1794, Aaron Thomas was an able seaman aboard the H.M.S. Boston, a fifth rate, thirty-two gun frigate that sailed to Newfoundland as part of a trade convoy (Murray 1968: vii-ix). Thomas's diary, addressed to a former shipmate, is a late eighteenth century example of

the travelogues that proliferate on the Internet today. In an entry dated August 14, the thirty-two year old wrote:

I have had occasion before, in more then [sic] one place, to mention how plentiful this Country is stored with Berrys. Nature has been abundantly gracious to this Country in that particular. All Countrys has something to recommend them, China has its Teas, Lapland has its Reindeer, Ireland has its Linnens and Italy has its delicious Fruits. Newfoundland has its Fish, and to that I may add it has its Berrys, which are gratefull to the taste and so abounding that Horses and Cows and Goats live upon them when they are ripe. The Berry which is to be found in the greatest quantitys is Hurts, they are called Whimberrys in England. They grow in surprizing plenty under the Spruce Trees and Brambles. Partridge Berrys are form'd like a large Pea and coloured like the finest Vermillion when ripe. They make good Tarts. These are in great abundance. Here also are Stone Berrys, Gooseberrys, Raspberrys, Currants and Cranberrys, with a great number of other Berrys which produce excellent food. The whole Country abounds with them in the month of August and quantitys of Cranberrys are sent to England (1968: 140).<sup>8</sup>

Already adhering to the established style of travel writing, Thomas compares Newfoundland's berries, and fish, to the unique products of other foreign countries (*vis-à-vis* England) before enumerating the many kinds he encountered. He himself may have gone berry picking, as he also reports that many of the ship's crew "were always ashore picking Berrys" (1968: 119). Indeed, the able seaman later declares that berries on the island are so numerous that domestic as well as wild animals may survive during the late summer months on a "continual feast of the most luxurious Berrys" (1968: 155).

Two centuries later, readers of Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News* are introduced to berry picking in chapter twenty-four, straightforwardly titled "Berry Picking." Proulx writes:

On the headlands and in the bogs berries ripened in billions, wild currants, gooseberries, ground hurts, cranberries, marshberries, partridgeberries, squashberries, late wild strawberries, crowberries, cloudy bakeapples stiff above maroon leaves.

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8. Editor Jean Murray notes that a "stone berry" as such is not known on the island, thus it is unclear to which berry Thomas refers here. The answer might lie in the fact that the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* reports "stone hurts" as one of several local names for the three types of blueberries growing wild in the area (1968: 262). However, the reader will note that Thomas differentiates between "Hurts" (common vernacular for "blueberries") and "Stone Berrys."

“Let’s go berrying this weekend,” said the aunt. “Just over a ways was well-known berrying ground when I was young. We’ll make jam, after. Berrying is pleasure to all” (1993: 191).

Quoyle’s aunt encourages him to invite a female neighbour, Wavey Prowse, in whom he is romantically interested. As both Narváez (1991: 355) and Omohundro (1994: 162) note, berry picking has traditionally provided an opportunity for young adults to interact with a modicum of privacy. Proulx thus sets the scene for a romantic encounter between Quoyle and Wavey. The setting also provides Wavey and the aunt an opportunity to discuss the great value placed on bakeapples, as well as another Newfoundland tradition, “berry ocky.”

“People used to come here for miles with their berry boxes and buckets,” said the aunt [Agnis] over her shoulder. “They’d sell the berries, you see, in those days.”

“Still do,” Wavey said. “Agnis girl, last fall they paid ninety dollars a gallon for bakeapples. My father made a thousand dollars on his berries last year. City people want them. And there’s some still makes berry ocky if they can get the partridge berries.”

“Berry ocky! There was an awful drink,” said the aunt (1993: 192).

Proulx’s prose emphasizes the traditionality of berry picking as a pleasurable *and* profitable activity.<sup>9</sup> The reference to “berry ocky,” while to my knowledge not reported since the early seventies,<sup>10</sup> is a notable

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9. Moreover, the author creates a status differential in the use of the berries, in that “city people” buy them from those in rural areas who pick them. However, my experience living in the province’s largest city, St. John’s, does not support such a scenario. While “city people” may certainly purchase berries from the roadside stands described above, they also pick them (sometimes in large quantities), and look forward to doing so. As Will Ferguson writes in *Beauty Tips from Moose Jaw*, “... it isn’t fish that Newfoundlanders are obsessed with; it’s berries. Right here — in the city [St. John’s], in a B&B right in the heart of town — the conversation, if left untethered, will drift towards the subject of berries: preferred seasons, the picking of, secret spots in which to find, areas overpicked and best avoided” (2004: 303). Hilda Chaulk Murray interviewed a number of people in the St. John’s and Mount Pearl area who recalled going berry picking as children in the first half of the twentieth century (2002: 93-94). The berries were used exclusively at home.
  10. The *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, undoubtedly Proulx’s source for the term, defines “berry ocky” as “a homemade drink of wild berries, esp. partridge berries, or jam and water,” listing two sources from 1969 and 1971 (Story, Kirwin and Widdowson 1982: 40).



allusion to the many berry beverages Newfoundlanders and Labradorians enjoy (see, e.g., *Them Days* 2000: 94-5; Jespersen 1974: 149-50; *Maple Leaf Mills* 1983: 105 for berry beverage recipes).

### Berries, Tradition, and Tourism

Berries have long been integral to Newfoundlanders' and Labradorians' food stores, as a generally dependable supplement to other subsistence activities. Berry picking is still an important late summer and early fall activity, combining local geographical knowledge with material culture, foodways, and custom. Although both men and women go berry picking, it has been understood in some areas to be primarily a female activity, or at least directed by females, with women in a community taking their children along while the men were out fishing (Narváez 1991: 341-42; O'Brien 1999: 81; Omohundro 1994: 162; see also Faris 1989: 32-33).

The berries ripen one after the other across the province as the summer winds down and autumn begins: first the wild strawberries, blackberries and currants, followed by the highly prized bakeapples,<sup>11</sup> then raspberries, succeeded by squashberries and blueberries, and lastly come the partridgeberries and marshberries (Gray 1977: 9,13; Omohundro 1994: 163-167; Pocius 1991: 127-130). These have been used primarily for jams and jellies, which might in turn have been used as flavouring in other dishes, or as pie filling. Other berries, eaten raw and not usually picked in large quantities, include teaberries, gooseberries, and dogberries.

While all the aforementioned berries have been utilized chiefly for domestic consumption, there is also a history of commercial sale to supplement primary income sources (Horan 1991b: 209-211; Narváez 1991: 342; Omohundro 1994: 165). Bidgood's Supermarket in the Goulds

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11. Levi Johansson reports a very different traditional attitude toward bakeapples/cloudberries, and berries in general, in the northern Sweden mountain district of Frostviken. He writes:

"Those years when the cloudberries were plentiful, one would pick masses of them and cook *mylgröt*, enough for a whole barrel, and more, for the winter. It was eaten with milk, but without sugar, just like any other porridge, and was mostly regarded as a surrogate for the real porridge. The other berries were used very sparingly and eaten freshly-picked with... fresh milk.... Berries were disdained, really. They were just food for the birds" (quoted in Genrup 1998: 159).

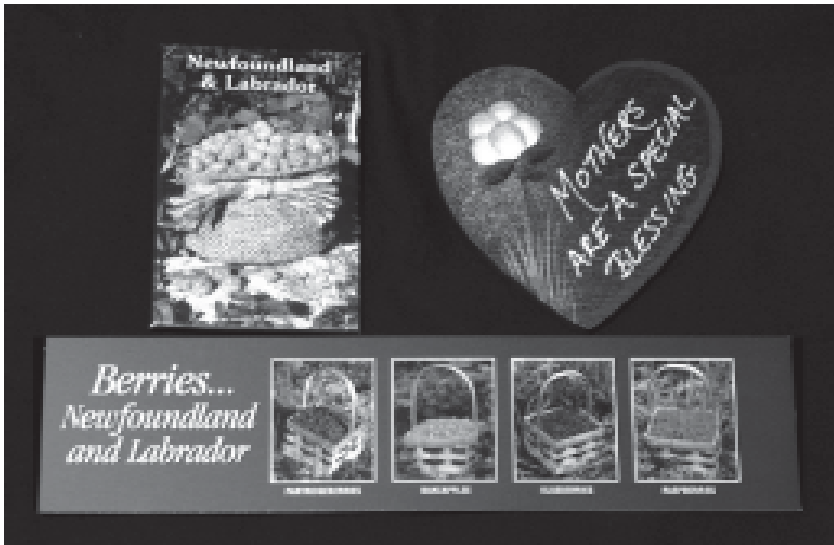
Figure 1.

Gillian's jam stand near Gunner's Cove in the summer of 2002.



Figure 2.

A few of the many berry souvenirs widely available in Newfoundland and Labrador.



advertised “Blueberries and Partridgeberries Wanted!! (large quantities)” in the August 28, 2004 edition of the St. John’s newspaper, *The Telegram*. In 1994 Omohundro observed that bakeapple pickers in Labrador could earn several thousand dollars in a season. Jars of berries, as well as jam and jelly, are sold from roadside stands in late summer, an enterprise in which both adults and children take part. Such stands may be temporary assemblages of card tables and folding chairs, or permanent structures the size of small storage sheds. During 2002 fieldwork, I met two preteen girls running competing jam stands on either end of a bridge near L’Anse aux Meadows, between Gunner’s Cove and Hay Cove. Both stands featured other homemade products such as knitted socks and baked goods, but the most popular sellers, both girls reported, were the partridgeberry and bakeapple jams. Rita Davis, proprietor of Lighthouse Cove B&B in L’Anse Amour, Labrador, would agree. She said,

[Tourists] love them all, but partridgeberry is the most favourite jam of all... Yes, because I tell you, I make partridgeberry muffins, I make partridgeberry pudding, I make a partridgeberry sauce to go over the pudding. And, of course, we have the partridgeberry jam... and I make a partridgeberry sauce to go over ice cream. Delicious! Something about the partridgeberry, they have this really nice flavour (2003).

Another example of the widespread popularity of partridgeberries was Tim Hortons partridgeberry muffin, frequently mentioned in vernacular travelogues.<sup>12</sup> Tom Leslie, of Toronto, visiting the province in August 2003, wrote, “Yesterday (Monday) we met up with Craig and Susan, after coffee and a partridgeberry muffin at Tim Hortons (yay!).” Similarly, “Mrs. T.,” a visitor from Philadelphia exclaimed, “Ate lunch in Clarenville and had a partridgeberry muffin. Now THIS I could get used to real fast! I had another” (2000).

In terms of commercial production, however, it is the blueberry that leads the native berry cohort. Of the three types of blueberries documented in the area — the low sweet blueberry, the northern dwarf blueberry, and the velvet-leaf blueberry<sup>13</sup> — the former is the most

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12. The partridgeberry muffin, discontinued in late 2003, was available only in Atlantic Canada. I obtained this information in April 2004 from Jennifer Vankooten, Consumer Nutrition Coordinator, Research and Development for Tim Hortons (personal communication). However, local bakeries continue to feature partridgeberry products such as muffins and loaves.

13. Horan notes that while the velvet-leaf blueberry “has been reported by... a number of botanists,” recent investigations “have questioned its existence in the Province” (1991b: 209).

widely harvested. Most significantly, the low sweet blueberry is free from the blueberry maggot that frequently plagues crops in the Maritimes and Maine (Horan 1991b).<sup>14</sup> Pamela Gray's informants identified blueberries as the "most popular and readily available" of the island's indigenous, potential foodstuffs, including flora and fauna, in response to the question, "What foods do you eat that you do not buy in the store?" Homemade blueberry wine has been a traditional Christmas drink (1977: 123-24, 140).

The bakeapple and the partridgeberry are more often employed in a symbolic fashion, however. Although bakeapples and partridgeberries are not unique to Newfoundland and Labrador even in the Canadian context,<sup>15</sup> as noted above, they are an important and frequently touted element of traditional regional cuisine. Bakeapples, particularly, are considered a treat to be savoured, and generally cost substantially more than other wild berries (Gray 1977: 156; Omohundro 1994: 164-65; Pocius 1991: 127).<sup>16</sup> For example, 250 ml jars of Legends bakeapple jam currently sells for \$11.75 CAD, while the same size jar of blueberry jam is \$7.25 CAD. Similarly, Labrador Preserve's 250 ml bakeapple syrup is priced at \$10.95 CAD. Their blueberry syrup, packaged in 375 ml bottles, retails for the same price. Thus, Frommer's author Curtis advises visitors, "If you come in mid-August, plan to attend the annual Bakeapple Festival, celebrating the berry that *stars* [emphasis added] in the desserts of Newfoundland and Labrador" (2000: 280).

The province's wild berries continue as important components of regional tradition, as well as commercial enterprise.<sup>17</sup> The berry industry has evolved in a number of ways from the days when local pickers sold the fruits of their labour to fish plant factors (Horan 1991a: 116-17, 1991b: 210; Omohundro 1994: 165). In addition to berries picked and sold by

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14. Blueberries are also called ground hurts, hurts, and low bush hurts locally (Horan 1991b: 209). The *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* also reports the variant names "hart," "hert," "hirt," and "whort," as well as "black hurt," "Indian hurt" and "stone hurt" (Story, Kirwin, and Widdowson 1982: 262).
  15. For example, *A Treasury of Nova Scotia Heirloom Recipes* claims bakeapple jam to be "distinctly Nova Scotia" (Hilchey 1967: 8).
  16. Known as "cloudberries" in Northern Scandinavia, the fruit is equally, if not more prized in those countries. Alan Davidson writes: "... the inhabitants of these peace-loving countries have been known to engage in 'cloudberry wars'; and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs maintains, or used to have, a special section for cloudberry diplomacy" (1999: 194).
  17. A visitor from England described the importance of the fruit as "the local obsession with berries" (Harris 2003).

individuals or family groups, there are large scale operations which harvest the fruit from unmanaged natural stands. The province is North America's largest producer of wild partridgeberries, with a mean annual harvest of 965,000 kilograms. No doubt because of the region's berry picking traditions, the commercial market for partridgeberries is greater outside the province, which has inspired local producers to experiment with European cultivars. The bulk of exported berries are frozen. Notably, the berry's niche markets are locations "across Canada where large numbers of Newfoundlanders have settled" (Hendrickson 1998). Although the berry is widely distributed across Canada, as noted above, Newfoundland and Labrador is one of only three Canadian provinces which have developed an industry around it (Hendrickson 1998). The partridgeberry is also harvested in Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan.

The fact that visitors are primed for an abundance of wild berries is demonstrated in their travelogues and comments about their experiences while in the province. Survey respondent Don Raymond wrote, "The bakeapple products were a revelation!" (2003).<sup>18</sup>

J. Bertilson, posting to *Britishexpats.com* advises, "You've got to try the local bake-apple and partridge berry jams." Howard Coady, whose vernacular travelogue relates his trip in great detail, writes:

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18. To reach a greater number of visitors and local travelers than I could by simply introducing myself and explaining my study as I had at B&Bs and tourist attractions during earlier field trips, I sought volunteers to complete a short survey by telephone, or postal or electronic mail in the summers of 2003 and 2004. I left surveys in self-addressed, stamped envelopes at B&Bs I visited in the province, as well as at tourist information offices and other locations at which tourist literature was available. I also created a flyer advertising the study, with tear-away tags, that I regularly posted in downtown St. John's over a three-month period in 2003. I posted variations of the flyer in other locations — Bloomington, Indiana; Austin, Texas; Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador; Montréal, Québec — as the opportunity arose. Those who responded, and had traveled in the study area, were offered the choice of completing a survey by email, or being interviewed by phone at their convenience. The vast majority chose to answer questions by email. Over the fifteen-month period from mid 2003 to late 2004, I received ninety-four completed surveys. The majority of participants, both those interviewed and those queried by survey only, were from outside the province, namely other Canadian provinces (primarily Ontario) and the United States. In addition, participants tended to be in their fifties and sixties, in accordance with general worldwide travel statistics.

The berries are great. If you visit Newfoundland, there are three berries you'll get to know: Partridgeberries (same thing as Lingonberries), Bakeapples (same thing as Cloudberry) and Blueberries. It was enough to get Susan thinking of Danish desserts. We had a culinary treat in Fortune — the chef at the motel we stayed in produced a wonderful partridgeberry pie made from fresh picked berries (2002).

Coady's statement makes the link between nature and culture clearly — the quality of the pie is tied to the freshness of the berries.

My interview with Rita Davis confirmed the prevalence of berry-centred discussions with tourists. She told me that

when people come here in the summertime, they say, "Rita, where you live to, we're surprised to see all the different kinds of berries that you people can get here." Because I mean we can get partridgeberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, squashberries, bakeapples... that's quite a variety of berries. And they're all good berries.... And everybody's surprised at Newfoundland and Labrador, the berries that grow.

Vernacular travelogue writers often describe the berries, seeking to provide the reader with both visual and gustatory information. Haligonian Tvor explains, "Partridgeberries are blue-reddish and taste like a combination of blueberries and cranberries and are a little tart. Bakeapples are amber and more expensive as they are harder to find and are a sweeter flavour. Both delicious though, on homemade scones" (2000). Lynda M.R., visiting relatives in Newfoundland in July 2000, wrote, "For those of you who have never been to Newfoundland and have no idea what a 'bakeapple' is, it's a very rare berry also known as the cloudberry that grows one berry to each plant — in bogs! Hard to get but worth it. Newfoundlanders love their bakeapples" (2003). Lynda's statement emphasizes the effort required of berry pickers in pursuit of bakeapples, as well as her insider knowledge of their local importance.

Among visitors to the province, discussion about how bakeapples got their name [which Bill Casselman asserts is "a one-hundred percent Canadian word" (1998: 12)] is frequent, and often occurs around the supper or breakfast table at inns and B&Bs. My fieldnotes from the morning of July 24, 2002 document one such conversation at the Lighthouse Cove B&B in L'Anse Amour, Labrador.

There are a variety of jams available, as well as jelly (bakeapple), which everyone seems eager to try. Barbara [from British Columbia] says that she found out that the name “bakeapple” comes from the French *appel* as in *sinappel*, without name, because they didn’t know what it was. Jack [from Florida] says when he heard the name, he thought it was an actual baked apple — he couldn’t imagine it. I mention that when I first heard the name [upon moving to Newfoundland in 1996], I thought it meant a special kind of apple, too. Someone asks Rita how many kinds of wild berries there are. She names off a long list, including a number I am not familiar with. Jack says he hasn’t heard of half of those and we all nod in agreement.

Thus, the oft-told etiological legend makes the rounds each season, circulating orally, electronically, and in print media. An anonymous webmaster, recounting her or his flying tour of Eastern Canada in 2003, wrote that in L’Anse aux Meadows,

berries are big business... and they have local names too. Bakeapples are said to be named by another linguistic misunderstanding. Supposedly, an Englishman asked a Frenchman what the berry was called, and the Frenchman answered with a question: “Baie qu’appelle?” — which means, “what is the berry called?” (“Eastern” 2003).

Even writers who doubt its veracity dutifully recount the story, thus contributing to its longevity (Dégh 2001). As Casselman reports,

one folk etymology of our Maritimes says that early French settlers first saw this berry new to them, and they inquired, in the improbable French of the folk story, “Baie, qu’appelle?” Berry, what’s it called? English settlers who came afterward heard this as bakeapple, claims the tale. *Mais je pense que non* (1998: 13).

Whether or not the teller or writer believes the legend to be true, relating it, either orally or in print, keeps the narrative in circulation.

Along with describing the province’s berries, and speculating about the origin of local names, visitors demonstrate a keen interest in the nutritional aspects of the fruit. For example, those who complained about fried foods or the lack of fresh fruits and vegetables (Everett 2005) often contrasted this criticism with praise for the local use of berries. Shirley Wilson and Marilyn Corbold, from British Columbia and Ontario respectively, applauded both the “wonderful berries” and the resourceful use of “what’s at hand, deliciously.” Similarly, Maureen Costantino of Virginia wrote,

... the farther north we went, and the sparser the population, the more bland the food became. However, although meals in general were uninspiring, the homemade rolls served at breakfast and dinner throughout the province were something to write home about. They were delicious, especially when spread with a bit of the homemade jams and jellies made from locally picked berries and fruits (2003).

Michael Marchmo, responding to queries posted on *Britishexpats.com* about Newfoundland, lists among “things to try,” “Bakeapple anything.” The exhortation follows his admonition that there is “fish, fish everywhere, but nobody knows how to do anything except deep fry or pan-fry them” (2002). Thus, according to such opinion, while the local use of seafood is “uninspiring,” as described by Costantino, berries are acceptably prepared.

### Berry Picking Time

Visitors to the province during berry picking season witness the regional custom firsthand. Debbie Gill, from British Columbia, wrote, “I can appreciate how hard people work to pick these berries, we saw them alongside the road everywhere.” Hikers happen across berry patches, making the connection between the wild fruits and regional specialties. Hence John Webb from Toronto wrote, “As we hiked many of the meadows and cliff tops in Newfoundland, we became aware of the many berries available, and we enjoyed them later in pies and tarts.” Cathy Deyo told me that she had been delighted to see blueberries growing wild on Signal Hill. Assuming that picking berries would be prohibited at this national historic site, but at the same time unable to resist them, she hunkered down and furtively stuffed a handful into her mouth. “When I raised up, though” she continued, laughing, “I saw five other people, plain as day, picking berries like mad!”<sup>19</sup> Still others, after sampling a berry pie or jam at a restaurant or B&B, are eager to find the fruit in the wild.

Ilona Biro, on assignment for the *The Globe and Mail*, visited the province in 2002. Her host, Bella Hodge of Valhalla Lodge in Gunner’s Cove, encouraged Biro and her friends to pick berries. Biro writes:

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19. Although technically they are residents of the state of Washington, Cathy and her husband, Allen, live full-time in a medium-sized RV. They took to life on the road upon retiring. I spoke with the Deyos while they were visiting St. John’s.



Meanwhile, after a few days at Hodge's, my companion and I had fallen deeply in love with partridgeberries. Beyond the usual jam, we had tasted all manner of sweets, sauces and even wine made from the tart berries. When we asked where we might find some to take home with us, Hodge sent us off on a mad berry hunt around Gunner's Cove: "You never know, you might get lucky and find a patch of your own," she teased.

Visitors to Newfoundland soon discover that islanders are passionate about their berries. There probably isn't a Newfoundlander who doesn't know of a decent berry patch, but just try to find out where they are. Berry pickers are a secretive bunch, especially when it comes to the bakeapple, whose single salmon-coloured berry sits like a jewel amid a bouquet of greenery.

Always up for a challenge, we went for a hike along the cliffs, hoping to find a few elusive berries. The lichen-and moss-covered cliffs were as soft as pillows underfoot, and to our surprise, we found blue flag irises, ivory mushrooms, bakeapple blossoms and Labrador tea plants growing like weeds (2002).

Even as Biro notes both the fruits' utility — jams, sweets, sauces and wine — and its local importance, her impassioned description of the berries renders the fruit as rare and mysterious "jewels." They are truly known only to locals, although visitors may pursue them "madly," heightening the romanticism of her narrative. As she notes later in the account, "I left with the feeling I had been somewhere exotic and beguiling."

Some guided tours include berry picking. "Going Places Together," which organizes group travel exclusively for women, featured berry picking on a September 2003 Newfoundland tour. Group members picked berries in the Trinity area and then returned to their lodgings, "to make something wonderful from our berries" (Nancy, personal communication). As with Biro's berry picking expedition, such activity connects visitors to local tradition, and leads them to reflect on the significance of local practices in both present-day and historical contexts. For example, survey respondent Marian Kloetstra, of Niagara Falls, Ontario, wrote, "People use what is available and what is free. The hunting, fishing and berry gathering must have been very important to survival." Cole and Nancy Underhill, also from Ontario, reasoned that regional foods, such as partridgeberry pie, jam and sauce, "reflect the

history of the island, and its very practical, self-sufficient people.” A Torontonion, noting that he and his traveling companion had “tried many of the jams and marmalades at bed and breakfasts,” said that he had learned about the province’s traditional foodways from the experience. He elaborated, “From bakeapples we learned how hard people work to collect them from the bogs.”

### **Marketing Newfoundland and Labrador**

Sought after both by local and visitors, berries and berry products are also in demand as souvenirs of Newfoundland and Labrador. Helene Cox from Manitoba wrote, “... fell in love with bakeapples — brought back several jams, including some home made.” Jams and jellies are the most often purchased for this purpose, a category which includes a number of locally produced products. Labrador Preserves in Forteau, for example, was established in 1975 and specializes in “all Natural Fruit spreads and syrups made with the freshest, juiciest wild berries, hand-picked in the pristine Labrador barrens” (Labrador Preserves 2004). Overseen by Stelman Flynn,<sup>20</sup> the berries are processed in a facility adjacent to Flynn’s Seaview Restaurant and Motel.

The Seaview Restaurant and Motel are located on the Labrador Straits’ main thoroughfare, Highway 510, that begins at the ferry terminal in Blanc Sablon, Québec. The road winds its way through a number of small coastal communities including L’Anse au Clair, Forteau, and L’Anse au Loup, and now ends at Red Bay (from which it continues, as a gravel roadway, to Cartwright). Because of its location, and the relatively small number of restaurants in the area, the Seaview is well patronized by locals and tourists alike. For example, I ate two meals there in four days. On my second visit, lasting approximately one hour, three other travelers with whom I had come in contact over the previous few days also came in for a meal. Labrador Preserves products are prominently displayed near the cash register. In many cases, they are the only berry goods sold in area gift shops (e.g., the shops at the ferry terminal, and the National Historic Site<sup>21</sup> and Whaler’s Restaurant in Red Bay).

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20. Flynn is also president of Forteau Food Processors, Limited.

21. The Red Bay National Historic Site consists of a reception and interpretation centre, as well as Saddle Island, the site of a Basque whaling station in the sixteenth century.

On the Great Northern Peninsula, the predominant berry product is manufactured by the Dark Tickle Company located in St. Lunaire-Griquet.<sup>22</sup> Developed in the early 1990s as the family fishing business came to an end, Steve and Gwen Knudsen turned to the peninsula's wild berries as a result of local and tourist interest. The fishing business had included a general store, part of which was a small gift section geared to the growing number of tourists drawn by the remains of the Viking settlement in L'Anse-aux-Meadows. Ms. Knudsen said, "People were looking to buy partridgeberry and bakeapple jam — we looked for a suitable product but couldn't find one" (Newfoundland 2002). In 2002, the company became the province's first "economuseum."<sup>23</sup> Their current product line includes chocolates, spiced syrups, jams, pickles, relishes, teas, and vinegars. The Knudsens' physical operation comprises a manufacturing plant, workshop, showroom, tea room, interpretive room, and an interpretive trail "that leads you into a typical Newfoundland bog where wild berries grow" (Dark Tickle 2002). Thus, the company has become a tourist attraction in itself.

Elizabeth Funk, visiting from the United States with her husband, described their visit to the Dark Tickle Company in a travelogue posted to *Globaltrekkers.com*.<sup>24</sup>

... we headed over to the Dark Tickle Jam Company to sample some products and buy gifts for friends. The shop has a small area for eating and an interpretation area which explains how berries are gathered and made into the company's products. Bill decided to try some bakeapple "drinkable berries." I had heard about the "drinkable berries" but had assumed that it was just juice — not so. Dark Tickle actually makes a berry syrup with sugar and spices. At the tasting area, they put two

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22. The story of the founding of The Dark Tickle Company inspired filmmaker Mary Sexton to begin developing a feature film called *Making the Dark Tickle*. However, at the time of this writing, the project appears to have stalled.
  23. The "economuseum" concept seeks to preserve and promote the knowledge and output of craftspeople engaged in traditional, artisanal activities such as jamming, whiskey distilling, soap-making and quilting, while offering "a culturally innovative tourism product." The Société Internationale des entreprises Économusées was founded in Québec in 1992 by Cyril Simard. As of August 2006, The Dark Tickle Company was one of eleven economuseums in Atlantic Canada, and the only one in Newfoundland and Labrador.
  24. The underlined words and phrases in this and the following quoted excerpts indicate where the authors created hyperlinks to other web pages. I have left these in order to highlight an important aspect of vernacular travelogues on the Internet, intertextuality, as previously noted (see also Titon 1995).

spoonfuls of syrup into a tea cup and then pour hot water over it to create one of the best tasting hot drinks I've ever had. I realized that the shelves of tan-colored plastic bottles, which I had been avoiding, were not maple syrup at all, but different flavors of the company's drinkable berries. Along with some jugs of drinkable berries, Bill and I bought wild blueberry jam, partridgeberry jam, bakeapple jam and some berry flavored teas (2002).

Introduced to the province's wild berries by way of partridgeberry sorbet served at the Cabot Club (Fairmont Hotel), as well as Stonehouse Renaissance's caribou and blueberry stew,<sup>25</sup> the Funks were primed for The Dark Tickle Company's products and educational presentation. They visited the economuseum with the express intent of purchasing souvenirs.<sup>26</sup>

A jar of jam, although breakable, can be easily wrapped and packed into a suitcase for the trip home, while a package of tea presents virtually no transportation risks. However, ease of transport is not always a deciding factor. As Lynda M.R. wrote:

On the way we passed through Markland where we went in search of the Rodrigues Winery. Our friends Trevor and Nicole are big fans of the fruit wines made here so we had to check it out. It took a bit of looking since it's called the Markland Cottage Winery and we were looking for something called Rodrigues Winery. We got ourselves sorted out and found it in the back of the town hall! It was worth the hunt though, the wines are delicious. We especially liked the Bakeapple and Barrens Blend.... We ended up buying 6 bottles of wine (the dessert wines come in 375 ml bottles) including one bakeapple (2003).

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25. The Stonehouse Renaissance restaurant, now defunct, specialized in traditional Newfoundland foods including seafood and wild game.
  26. Jams, jellies and related products such as teas are successful tourist industries in a number of locations in Atlantic Canada. In New Glasgow, Prince Edward Island, for example, the Prince Edward Island Preserve Company, which encompasses a demonstration kitchen, retail store with sample counter and restaurant, does a brisk business during the tourist season. My visit on August 20, 2001, which coincided with the arrival of three tour buses, provided me the opportunity to explain what bakeapples are to a tourist from Québec. The employee managing the sample counter at the time explained that she was unable to describe the berries or identify where they grow because the company does not "make that jam on-site." The Prince Edward Island Preserve Company is online at <http://www.preservecompany.com/>

Now Rodrigues Winery, Markland Cottage Winery began production in 1993, under the ownership of Marie-France and Hilary Rodrigues. Manufacturing berry and other fruit wines, the operation earned Canadian certification as Kosher and Pareve for Passover in 2001. Rodrigues' wild berry wines include blueberry, partridgeberry (labeled as "lingonberry"), bakeapple (labeled "wild cloudberry"), and black currant, while their strawberry and cranberry wines come from cultivated patches. The winery also sells black currant, cloudberry, and cranberry liqueurs. Moreover, the winery utilizes iceberg water in the processing of its beverages, and the image of an iceberg on a number of wine labels, directly linking the province's wild berries and the icebergs of many provincial tourism campaigns. As the winery's brochure plainly states, "The wine labels represent the best expression of the natural fruit grown in a true pollution free environment of clean soil, clean air and clean water, nurtured by Mother Nature. Naturally" (2004). Thus, the berries are linked to ideas of purity, as well.

Like The Dark Tickle Company, Rodrigues Winery offers visitors a chance to observe everyday operations. Tours are available year round, and include the primary and secondary fermentation and processing areas, the racking and holding tank area, iceberg water tanks, the Slivovitz style triple copper pot still (for the distillation of the company's pear and plum brandies, as well as the future production of vodka and schnapps<sup>27</sup>), and wine tasting. In addition, tour participants visit the fully automated bottling line. Capable of bottling approximately one hundred cases in an hour, the mechanized workhorse neatly embodies the commercialization of traditional beverage-making practices in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thus, through observation, participation and discussion, tourists are readily able to connect berries and berry products to the tourism board's emphasis on nature and Newfoundlanders' historically deep connection to it. The province "has long been promoted for tourists as... a place to be in touch with an older, more natural existence," as sociologist James Overton writes (1996: 144). As much a construct as any other current government production, Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism's main emphasis has until very recently focused on the province's

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27. Slivovitz style distillation is eastern European in origin. Slivovitz is a dry plum brandy.

“outdoor nature product” (Dooley).<sup>28</sup> In the course of my fieldwork, I found that many visitors to the Atlantic region primarily come to enjoy “the great outdoors.” Rather than spend much time touring cities and well-known tourist attractions, they prefer to concentrate on provincial and national parks as well as other rural and wilderness areas. Newfoundland and Labrador, in comparison to the bucolically supercharged vacationsapes of Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, is carving a market niche as one of North America’s last “unspoiled” destinations. Features or activities unique to the province, such as the caribou herds and iceberg tracking, contribute to the widespread perception of the region, on the part of both residents and visitors, as culturally and geographically distinct from other Atlantic Canadian provinces. Such sights and experiences can also be linked culinarily, as in this meal description by New Mexico resident Deane Crawforth.<sup>29</sup>

We just had to try Labrador specialties for dinner tonight. We had Caribou Hamburgers, “Bake Apple” pie, and had our drinks cooled with chunks of “genuine Iceberg ice”! (Bake Apples are a local name for “Cloud Berries,” a peach-colored berry that tastes something like apples. And, yes, our waitress assured us that the ice really did come from an iceberg. In the spring, some local man goes out to icebergs with a boat, and takes chunks of ice to sell to the restaurants and bars, so they can sell it to tourists like us. Our restaurant keeps it separate in a special container until they sell it) (2001).

Crawforth’s statement pulls flora, fauna, and geology together, perfectly echoing the province’s main marketing themes.

The connection between the province’s scenery and its wild berries is made explicit in other vernacular travelogues as well. Of his stay in the Labrador Straits, a web site author who identifies himself simply as “Dave,” writes:

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28. For the 2006 provincial tourism campaign, the government shifted from its years-long emphasis on nature to marketing that incorporates more references to Newfoundland and Labrador culture, including elements of everyday life in the province. For example, the wild, grand landscape of the 2006 provincial travel guide’s front cover is domesticated by a clothesline from which several white sheets flutter.
29. This quotation is taken from Crawforth’s vernacular travelogue. I first contacted Crawforth through his extensive web site, after which he answered a series of questions by email.

Rita, our hostess, gives us bakeapples over vanilla ice cream and they are absolutely delicious. When the woman who Sean didn't hit with his motorcycle told us about the bakeapple festival, we tried to picture apple trees in Labrador. But a bakeapple is a little orange berry with a shape like a raspberry that grows singly on the ground. They have little white flowers which, we're told, collapse inward and then change color before the bakeapple emerges from within; first the berry is reddish, then it turns bright orange when it's ready to be picked. They're tart and sweet and yeah, a little apple-y, but they're not just a quirky local food, they're *delicious*. They strike an unexpected chord of food-joy in me; how could we have never heard of something *this good*? In their own way the bakeapples are as amazing and surprising as the whales and the icebergs; they must be one of the fruits we forgot about when the Gate was locked behind us (1999).

Dave's exuberant response to bakeapples combines surprise at not being familiar with such a wonderful foodstuff, and pleasure in having finally "discovered" it. He is also careful to point out that it's not just locals who enjoy the berries, emphasizing the importance of his etic and thus perhaps more objective perspective.

As dramatic as Dave's declarations may strike the reader, once they have eaten local berries, some visitors do indeed find them hard to forget. As Rita Davis told me,

Now I'm doing up a bottle now to send out to Toronto. Last year after [a guest] left here she emailed back and wondered could she exchange a bottle of partridgeberry jam for some maple syrup. And, of course, we emailed back and told her yes.... "Rita," she said, "I haven't had a good piece of toast since I got home."

Rita has also traded her jams for elderberry jam from the States. Rita identifies what she believes to be a fundamental difference between jam and jelly in the province and elsewhere, which may help clarify its appeal. She explained:

I think what it is, we sweeten our jam to a taste that's suitable. And a lot of people say, "Oh, I like that tarty taste in your jam." And that's what I think makes it more enjoyable. [HE: Yeah, not so sweet.] No, because I mean some people go by this recipe, I know, like jellies, because if you don't put in the right amount of sugar your jelly won't set, and you have to do that. But now with jams, you can substitute. Not put so much [sugar] and just have more berries than what it calls for and less sugar... And some people are diabetics, too, and can't enjoy sweet things, where when they come [here] they say, "Oh my,

your jam's delicious, I just love it!" Everybody goes crazy over it!  
(2003)

Rita's bed and breakfast, by virtue of its location and well-deserved reputation, gives Rita and her husband, Cecil, non-stop access to tourists for the full season. Like many B&B proprietors in the province, they are often fully booked months in advance. Rita sets her breakfast table with an impressive array of homemade jams, made from berries handpicked by Cecil, and enjoys talking about them with visitors.

Both Rita and Cecil spend a considerable amount of time with their guests discussing the details of everyday life in Labrador. Rita has the added perspective of having grown up across the strait in Newfoundland. Bakeapples in Labrador, for example, are believed by many to be superior to those in Newfoundland. Omohundro reports that Flower's Cove residents often traveled to the Labrador coast by skiff to pick bakeapples prior to Confederation. Women from Main Brook accompanied their husbands to Labrador, to pick berries while the men fished (Omohundro 1994: 164-65). Rita, who is originally from Flower's Cove, often demonstrates the difference in the bakeapple crops to guests through the foods she serves. She explained,

You know, the Labrador bakeapple is far better than Newfoundland bakeapple. I've had people come here, and of course I've often, like I've made bakeapple pies and I serve bakeapples on a cheesecake and things like that. And when I have the dessert, I say to them, "Well, I'm going to serve you bakeapple pie or bakeapple cheesecake." And they say, "Well, I'm sorry, but we *don't like* the bakeapples." And I say, "Well, where did you eat them to?" And they say, "Well, we had some in Newfoundland, but we didn't care for them." So I said, "If you don't mind, I'm just going to give you a little on top, and you taste it and you tell me if you like them or not." And when they taste, they says, "Oh! This is so different! These are delicious!"

Rita attributes the difference between Newfoundland and Labrador bakeapples to climate. She told me:

But what it is, I think, now what makes a difference in Newfoundland, you get hotter weather. And bakeapple is a berry that loses its colour very quickly. The sun fades it out and once the colour goes the flavour goes. Now, our bakeapples... here we get colder weather, and our berries stay really orange, orange, for a much longer time. We don't get that hot sun like you get in Newfoundland. And when I serve bakeapples mine is a *deep* orange.... When they lose their colour, they



lose their flavour.... When the berries are nice and orange, that's when the flavour's good.

Rita's experience, growing up in Flower's Cove, then moving across the Straits, underpins her complex understanding of the flora and fauna of each area, which she now utilizes in her role as a host. During my short stay in her home, she took the time to explain environmental factors influencing domestic food production, discussing the subtleties of moose and caribou feeding patterns with me late in the evening after a long day of cooking, cleaning, and answering other guests' questions.

## Conclusion

Tourists to Newfoundland and Labrador who venture out of the major centres must out of necessity camp or stay at B&Bs in outport communities, a circumstance which brings them into contact with small, locally run grocery stores, home cooking, and the food traditions Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have developed over centuries of trial and error in a harsh climate. For many visitors, such contact is exemplified by "a good piece of toast," spread with jam made from berries picked by their host(s). Meals incorporating locally provisioned and prepared foods create a space in which Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can illuminate the connections between land, sea, climate, and consumption that constitute traditional foodways.

As Anna Meigs succinctly states,

Most persons in the industrialized world do not grow food or see or know those who do. We encounter food in tins, in boxes, under plastic. We know food as inert matter dissociated from its human producers and natural context. In fact, children in societies such as ours must be taught that the impersonal lifeless packages we call "food" were originally living animals or plants (1997: 104).

Whereas ethical and moral uncertainty or conviction precludes many tourists from trying seal meat or purchasing seal products, and health concerns prevent the enjoyment of regional favourites such as fish and chips, berries offer visitors a window into local culture beyond reproach — and for which they need not reproach the locals.

In *Rare Birds*, Edward Riche's restaurateur protagonist, Dave, reluctantly attempts to assist a birdwatcher whose car has been stolen. The visitor is shocked to find himself a crime victim in Newfoundland.

“How dreadful,” [the birdwatcher] squeaked again. “You don’t expect it here.”

It was the hollow myth of Newfoundland again. The people were all supposed to be so sweet and colorful but never dangerous, the good poor. This was Canada’s Happy Province. I’ll introduce you to some of the car cannibals, thought Dave. They’d club you like a seal pup and sell your organs for the price of a dozen beer (1997: 223).

If the seal hunt symbolizes the dangerous poor in the tourist gaze (Urry 2002; Everett 2005: 126-150), and the fried food surfeit the ignorant and lazy poor (Everett 2005: 153-181), then the traditional and emergent uses of the province’s wild berries must surely represent the “good poor.” Tourists frequently remarked on the hard work in which locals engage to procure the berries, the fruits’ healthful attributes, and the ingenuity involved in making the berries “big business.” Moreover, they linked the use of berries to an admirable relationship with the natural environment, and, as noted previously, “an older, more natural existence” (Overton 1996: 144). Dovetailing with the provincial government’s emphasis on flora, fauna, and other natural features, Newfoundland and Labrador’s wild berries provide tourists with a guilt-free icon of authentic, traditional culture in which they may participate on a number of levels.

Largely organically grown and adaptable to a wide range of consumer goods, the province’s berries present the local tourist industry with an ideal culinary tourism product. Newfoundlanders’ and Labradorians’ canny recognition of the appeal of goods vaunted as authentic, either through production or use, is coupled with a growing acknowledgment that “[t]he aesthetic presentation of locally and regionally produced foodstuffs in new taste combinations appeals to sophisticated urbanites who want food that has both cultural authenticity and cachet” (Terrio 1996: 71). Well aware of the etic construction of Newfoundland and Labrador culture, as evidenced in mass-mediated productions such as *The Shipping News*, the individuated nature of tourism in the province currently provides a number of opportunities for local inhabitants to perform their culture *as they wish it to be perceived*. Moreover, they are constructing and performing public identities as members of a unique regional culture, for as geographer Phillip Crang notes, “Identity politics are at the heart of tourism labour processes” (1997: 152). Culinary tourism is often a process of negotiation, and Lucy Long highlights the

importance of the social dimensions of culinary tourism in her identification of “explication” as a key strategy (2003: 39-42).

As Susan Terrio explains,

Craft commodities... are imbued with and are the bearers of the social identities of their makers and for this reason retain certain inalienable properties. Produced in limited quantities, using traditional methods and/or materials, they evoke uninterrupted continuity with the past. The historicities of these goods, even if invented or altered, give them special value for both use and gift exchange (1996: 71).

Jams and jellies produced by local companies or bed and breakfast proprietors bear such marks of distinction.

Local culinary productions must also contend with significant class-based expectations, however. Perhaps most importantly for the Canadian Tourism Commission’s culinary tourism project — admittedly targeting “...Wine and Culinary Enthusiasts... with the relative affluence required to pursue interests in fine wine and gourmet food” (Research Resolutions 2003: 3) — berries are also processed into high status consumables, such as wine and artisanal chocolates (Terrio 2000). Businesses like The Dark Tickle Company expertly connect the past with the present in product presentation and promotional literature while appealing to ideals of “quality and taste” (Dark Tickle 2004). As Dark Tickle’s brochure explains,

For hundreds of generations, nutritional, tasty and plentiful wild berries were a staple of life for native people and European settlers. Canada’s aboriginal people found many useful purposes for berries — food, medicines, dyes, and fibres. These same berries helped sustain life for Vikings, Basque whalers, French explorers and European settlers. Today, these heritage berries are still harvested by the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In this efficient statement, the historical pedigree of the “heritage” fruit is established and connected with the province’s master narrative. Although the company does not produce wine, it connects to wine’s culinary status. Dark Tickle’s brochure also asks “... how about a glass of blueberry wine with hors d’oeuvres before dinner?” The statement creates a frame for consumers to consider other popular berry products, such as wine and liqueurs.

The Rodrigues winery utilizes the established oenological model to promote its products, in conjunction with an emphasis on the unique, natural qualities of each berry, as noted above. All Rodrigues wines, for example, bear the descriptive “exotique” on their labels. The company’s brochure and web site emphasize the “pollution-free” nature of their products, describe the bouquet and finish of the wines, and recommend food and wine matches that bring local berries into the lexicon of established flavour pairings. For instance, “Exotique Lingonberry (Partridgeberry) Wine” is suggested as “an ideal partner with fish or fowl, especially turkey.” Rodrigues’ blend of partridgeberries and blueberries, the “Exotique Wild Barrens Blend Wine,” is an “ideal complement with red or white meat dining,” while the equally versatile “Exotique Cranberry Wine” may be served “slightly chilled with turkey, baked ham, grilled salmon, veal or pork tenderloin.” There are, notably, no wines, brandies, or liqueurs suggested for pairing with seal flipper pie or fish and chips, an omission which underscores both the dichotomy between domestic and commercial realms of consumption in the province, and the ongoing construction of the culinary tourism product canon in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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