# BERMUDA FOLKLIFE
DOCUMENTARY SERIES

## Foodways

Study Guide

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GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Ministry of Social Development and Sports
**Department of Community and Cultural Affairs**

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# Contents



# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The guide begins with a list of preview questions students should consider before watching the documentary and questions they could consider after watching it. Questions for discussion, comprehension testing and writing are included in all chapters. A glossary of terms is given where necessary. The first chapter gives biographies of the three chefs featured in the film while the second, third and fourth focus on the history of food in Bermuda, dishes special to Bermuda and their outside influences, and food served on Bermudian holidays and festivals.

A supplement to the Bermuda Folklife Foodways Documentary, created by the Bermuda Government's Department of Community and Cultural Affairs, this study guide is a classroom resource primarily for middle and high school teachers of Health and Nutrition, History and Writing. It is a useful resource for creative writing, particularly Bermudian historical fiction.

## Preview Questions

1. How often do you eat fast food – i.e. any of the following:
   - Frozen dinners
   - Hamburgers
   - Take-out Kentucky Fried Chicken and French fries
   - Hot dogs
2. Is eating fresh food prepared from scratch important to you?
3. Do any of your family members grow vegetables and/or herbs that they use in their cooking?
4. Do you fish or do you have a fisherman in the family providing you with fresh fish?
5. How often do you eat fish?
6. Have you had dishes in Bermuda that you have not seen prepared in countries anywhere else? If so, what are they?
7. What flour is most commonly used in the bread we either make or buy today?
8. In what ways do you think Bermudian cuisine has been influenced by people coming to Bermuda from abroad? Can you identify different nationalities?
9. What would you say are Bermuda's most traditional dishes? Have you and your family ever prepared them?
10. In your experience, how important is food during holidays and celebrations? How important is it, for example, at Cup Match?
11. Have you ever thought about what the first settlers ate when they arrived? Whose food would have been healthier – theirs or ours? Why?

## Questions for Discussion after Watching the Documentary

1. Why is it important to record what the three chefs featured in the documentary have contributed to Bermuda's foodways?
2. Have you ever met any of these chefs or seen them on television?
3. What experiences and values do they have in common?
4. Would you agree with the three chefs that Bermuda does have its own cuisine? How important is that and what effect could it have on Bermuda tourism?

# Biographies of Joe Gibbons, Fred Ming and Dolly Pitcher

## Joe Gibbons

Joe Gibbons' first career was in business banking at the Bank of Butterfield in Bermuda. But he never forgot his family roots. His grandfather, Harold Gibbons, was a hotelier; upon his retirement, he founded and ran the Pink Beach Club, which as Joe says in the documentary, had an excellent reputation. Joe's father was also a hotelier working in hotels such as The Breakers. He taught Joe how to cook a cream sauce when Joe was six or seven. At the age of 35, Joe decided to switch careers by attending culinary college in the US, subsequently taking a diploma degree in Paris. He worked in a hotel in Southern France and then for renowned chef Anton Mosimann in the prestigious Belgravia Club in London.

After returning to Bermuda, he taught culinary skills through the Bermuda College and began writing restaurant reviews and articles for the media, including a food and wine notebook for *The Bermudian* magazine. He also had his own TV show on VSB television called "Cooking with Friends", which he jointly produced with Emma Warren. A member of the American Culinary Federation, he joined the Bermuda chapter headed by Fred Ming. In 2001 he joined the Bermuda Connections Smithsonian Folklife Festival project, interviewing many former chefs and restauranteurs who had worked in Bermuda's hospitality industry. His interest in history (his first degree was in history) channelled into the history of food, especially Caribbean food. He attended the Festival in Washington, interviewing Bermuda chefs who were demonstrating their culinary arts to the public. Since then he has regularly been reading about food history and the effects food has had on society. He also has a restaurant, Thyme, above Elbow Beach Resort Hotel on the site of its old staff club.

## Fred Ming

Growing up in Devonshire, Fred Ming had many relatives who exposed him to cooking, including his grandmother May Ming, his mother Inez and his elder sister, Cora, all excellent cake makers. His aunt Emma Ming, who worked at the Crow Lane bakery, was also an excellent cake maker and had her own part-time catering business. As he says in the documentary, even though his uncle Reginald Ming became known for his cakes, Fred was under the impression cooking was "really a ladies' thing." A Cunningham School visit aboard the ocean liner the *Queen of Bermuda* changed his perception since all the chefs in the galley were male. Becoming intrigued by the technical aspects to cooking, he studied at the Bermuda Hotel School at Prospect, and then went on to study culinary arts at a

higher standard at the Ealing Technical College in London. This would be just the start of his education: he completed an apprenticeship at the prestigious Savoy Hotel in London and then took his teacher training qualification at Battersea College of Domestic Science in London. Returning to Bermuda, he worked and taught at the Hotel School while taking many courses at Cornell University and at Johnson and Wales in Rhode Island as well as management courses at the Bermuda College. He was at first deputy head of the Hotel School in Prospect, becoming the first acting head of the first purpose-built hotel and hotel school erected at Stonington in Paget as part of the Bermuda College (his son Shawn is also a chef and is now a lecturer at the Bermuda College). Fred became the head of the Bermuda chapter of the elite American Culinary Federation and a board member of the elite American Academy of Chefs. A recipient himself of several culinary awards, he has been a judge in many culinary competitions both in Bermuda and throughout the United States. In 2011 he was honoured in Florida as one of the world's most outstanding chefs. He is frequently profiled in the media and demonstrated his culinary skills at the 2001 Smithsonian Folklife Festival. He is the author of two Bermuda cookbooks: *Bermuda Favourites* (2004) and *Bermuda Traditions* (2007).

## Dolly Pitcher

From the 1970s until present-day, Dorothy "Dolly" Pitcher has been known for her vibrant personality as well as for the delicious seafood and fish dishes she would cook and serve every year at Cup Match and at other cricket county games. Indeed, many people would go for her food even more than for the cricket (see Chapter Four). Born in St. David's in 1934, Dolly grew up in a cooking household since both her parents, Joyce and Sydney Pitcher, were chefs. Her father, she told *The Bermudian* magazine, was the first to make conch stew which he would sell at Cup Match. He and his wife also cooked at St. David's Lighthouse for the people finishing the Newport Race. Dolly herself learned to cook when she was six. She and her sisters would go fishing off the rocks on the beach her grandmother and Tommy Fox (a well-known St. David's islander) used to share before the coming of the Base (see study guide for Bermuda Folklife Documentary on Ronnie Chameau). She would catch grunts (her favourite, as she says in the film) and chubs and then cook them on a fire outside. By the time she was 15, she had her first job working on the US Naval Base. In their spare time Dolly and her family would make mussel pies for church fairs held at Chapel of Ease in St. David's. Dolly would also help her father at Cup Match and at the Newport Race. When her father died, she took over at Cup Match and county cricket games, becoming famous for her mussel pies, curried lobster and fried fish dishes. She has often been featured in Bermuda's media, appearing in Lucinda Spurling's *St. David's, An Island Near Bermuda.* She also demonstrated her culinary skills at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, held in Washington DC in 2001.

## Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. Is it ever too late to pursue a dream? What do you think of Joe Gibbons' decision to change his career from banking quite late in life? What would be the advantages? What would be the disadvantages?

2. When you were growing up, did either of your parents teach you a skill like cooking that you could do together as a family? For example, were you ever taught how to garden, do carpentry, sew or knit or paint? Do you think that exposure could influence your choice of career? How important do you think it is for parents and family to pass on their skills to their children? Or do you think schools can teach everything students need to know?

3. In what ways are Chefs Gibbons', Ming's and Pitcher's experiences, views and skills similar? In what ways are they different?

4. Do you like to cook? Would you consider becoming a chef? Do you think today it is still primarily a male occupation in the hospitality industry?

# Chapter 1: The History of Food in Bermuda: An Overview – The 17th and 18th Centuries

As Mr. Gibbons points out in the documentary, many people today have become remote from the source of their food. Ms Pitcher remembers enjoying cooking and eating whole fish with heads, a practice many people would not follow today although their ancestors did. Instead, they demand prepared fillets of fish. Whereas today, most people go to the supermarket to buy meat, vegetables, dairy and breads, the majority of which are imported, Bermuda's settlers had to rely on what they found readily available on the island, and on what they could grow. The early settlers from England feasted on cahows, which they ate almost to extinction; turtles and turtle eggs; berries, including those of the palmetto and cedar; and, of course, fish. The Bermuda or Somers Company sent seed and livestock (mostly turkeys and chickens) with each wave of settlers from England but as Mr. Gibbons points out, wheat – the staple we take for granted today for making breads and cakes – would have been impossible to export by sail to an island as remote as Bermuda. It would have rotted en route. So *corn (maize) crops,* originally from the New World, were crucial for breads and batters. People would make corn meal or flour by pulverising the kernels in mortars (often muskets were used as pestles). Corn also had its disadvantages since once rats came to Bermuda on a ship, they too feasted on corn. *Cassava* root from the West Indies was also used. It was peeled and grated into a flour. More finely ground cassava flour is called *farine* or *farina.* By 1790, arrowroot was grown on the island and used as a thickener and as a starch. It was Bermuda's first profitable export throughout the 19th century until 1922 and was used by many as a substitute for cassava.

In 1616, Governor Daniel Tucker dispatched the *Edwin* ship to the West Indies to bring back cuttings, seedlings and seeds more suitable for Bermuda (see table page 6). Thus began the West Indian influence on Bermuda's cuisine which has continued to this day. Subsequently, traders would continue to bring seeds, cuttings and spices from the West Indies as well as from North America. They would also bring dark rum and unrefined brown sugar. As Mr. Gibbons points out in the film, the highest quality sugar was sent to companies in the UK to be refined into white sugar and syrups. He also alludes to the connection between the European demand for sugar and the slave trade. The Middle Passage may not have happened were it not for the burgeoning sugar industry.

As Mr. Gibbons explains, food was healthy since people would mostly have eaten freshly caught fish and seafood – for example, snapper, grouper, mullet, mussels, lobster (crayfish) and wahoo. Bones found in archaeological digs in Bermuda bear this out. Turkey, chicken, mutton and pork were also eaten. Cows were on the island from 1616, as Governor Nathaniel Butler attests in his history, so beef would have been eaten but became more common later. Often families would share pieces of a slaughtered animal so that they could eat it fresh and not waste it. But beef, pork and fish were also salted for preservation. Spices such as cinnamon, allspice and nutmeg, and herbs, especially thyme, were used as flavourings. In the first years of the settlement, Bermudians made their own salt in Bermuda. They would store salt water in pans to evaporate and then boil it in kettles. Once the Bermuda Company disbanded in 1684, Bermudian traders, using enslaved labourers, raked salt in the Turks and

Caicos (see Chapter Three). They largely abandoned farming in favour of maritime pursuits but women continued to grow fruits and vegetables. People would also have used locally-grown fruits to make jams and chutneys.

However, throughout the late 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries, Bermuda depended greatly on imported food because there was so little interest in farming once the Somers Isle Company was disbanded in 1684.

## Some Crops Grown in Bermuda After Seeds and Cuttings Were Imported from England and The West Indies

### Imported on the *Edwin* from the West Indies in 1616:

Bananas
Cassava
Eddoes
Pawpaws (although Henry May had seen them while shipwrecked in Bermuda in 1593)
Pineapples
Plantains
Pomegranates
Sugar cane
Sweet potatoes
Spices – cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice

## Imported from the Somers Isle Company in 1616

Corn or maize (via the New World)
Lemons
Mulberries
Onions
Oranges

### Herbs:

Anise
Basil
Cumin
Fennel
Marjoram
Parsley
Thyme

## Dairy

Mr. Gibbons argues that butter was very, very rare until the 19th century. However Dr. Jarvis argues in his *In the Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians and the Maritime Atlantic World 1680–1783* that two thirds of landowning households owned livestock – goats and cows – and had dairy equipment for making cheese and butter. However, it is probably true that the poor did not have as much access to cheese and butter.

## Two Typical Dishes as Made By Mr. Gibbons in the Documentary:

1. **Fish stew**. Fish was cut into chunks, dusted in cassava or cornflour and cooked in pork fat and placed in a pot. Fish stock, made from fish bones and water, was added, together with fresh vegetables and fruits such as chopped cassava and plantain for starch, lemongrass, hot bird peppers, sweet potatoes, thyme, salt, rum and brown sugar for flavour. No butter or cream was used. As a result, according to Mr. Gibbons, it was a very healthy dish.
2. **Johnny bread** (or hoe bread) was made from cornmeal mixed with water and fried. As Mr. Gibbons explains, enslaved people and field workers would mix the batter in the field, put a dollop of it on their hoe which they would hold over a fire. This practice originated in the West Indies and was also followed in plantations of the American South. Sometimes the bread was served with jam.

## The 19th and 20th Centuries

During the 19th century, Bermuda's economy was directly affected by the transition from sailing ships to steamers and by the loss of the Turks and Caicos salt trade. As a result there was a renewed interest in farming. Bermuda became New York's market garden as farmers would export their fresh produce on steamers to New York whose residents were only too pleased to have fresh vegetables during their winter and spring months. It was during this period that Bermuda became so famous for its sweet onions that Bermudians themselves became known as "Onions". Corn was no longer grown as a staple although the Portuguese grew it for animal feed. However, more vegetables, such as Irish potatoes, celery, lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, parsley, beets and beans, would have been available locally. Steamers would also bring into Bermuda a wider range of foods, including canned foods and soups, which by the 1880s greatly increased in both volume and range. Curry powder and concentrated beef extract became more readily available in the second half of the 20th century. As Ms Pitcher explains, during her youth seasonings in jars were not available. Her seasonings were salt, fresh onions, garlic and pepper. Later, white sugar was imported, as well as white flour, which would have an impact on cake and bread making.

## Some Typical Recipes

1. **Bread and Butter Pudding**, according to Mr. Gibbons, was made from stale cornbread soaked in water and mixed with beaten egg and became a staple in the late 19th century. Spices were added and sometimes it would be served with jam as a special treat. It could also be served with canned *caramelised* condensed milk. The unopened can would be boiled for a couple of hours, so the milk would convert into a caramel sauce.
2. **Stuffed lobster** was described by Ms Pitcher in the documentary. She takes the cooked lobster out of the shell, chops the meat finely, seasons it and puts it back in the half shells along with a homemade stuffing. It is then baked.

3. **Curried lobster** made by Dolly Pitcher in the documentary is prepared with the following ingredients:
    - onions sautéed in butter
    - flour mixed with cornmeal and seasoning
    - Oxo cubes and/or a can of beef consommé
    - seasoning including, paprika, curry powder, cayenne pepper and black pepper, dry mustard, thyme, a little parsley, seasoning salt, onion and garlic powders, as well as a dash of sugar
    - two cans of vegetable soup
    - chunks of lobster (mussels or chopped fish could be used instead)

## Early Kitchens and Equipment

With today's readily available kitchen appliances – refrigerators, gas and electric stoves, microwave ovens and food processors – it is difficult to imagine how housewives managed to prepare and store food. Here are some of the appliances and implements they typically used:

### Ovens

In the early years of the settlement, houses were cabins made out of dried palmetto leaves. Cooking was done outside on fires in caves or under overhanging rocks. Ovens were cut out of rock faces. When stone houses were constructed, they were built with large hearths and brick ovens. Firewood was mostly sagebush, cedar kindling and Pride-of-India logs. In some cases kitchens were built separate from the main house to reduce the risk of fire. After 1941 kerosene, wood and electric stoves replaced the brick ovens. However, many people, particularly in St. David's, would sometimes cook on outside fires. Today, outside cooking is very popular and much easier thanks to charcoal or gas barbeques.

### Some Pots and Utensils

A **Dutch oven** was placed over a fire on the hearth. Lined with green banana or arrowroot leaves, it was used for baking Johnny bread and other breads. Unlined, it was used for cooking meat.
A round cauldron-like iron **pot** with three legs was hung on a hook over the fire and used for cooking meat and vegetable stews and fish chowder.
**Trivets** were used as rests for cooking pots.
**Pot hooks** were used for removing pots without handles off the fire.
**A baking iron or griddle** was used for frying pancakes and griddle cakes.
**Knives,** long **ladles, tongs** and spoons were essential for cutting meats and produce, removing hot foods from the fire and serving meals.
An iron **kettle** was hung from a hook over the fire and used for boiling water.
Clay **jugs** were used for storing salt and ginger beer.
An iron **axe** was used for splitting a cow or a pig.
Earthenware and silver **dishes** and **platters** were for serving food.
A **grater,** made out of corrugated tin with nails banged into the tin, was used for grating cassava and arrowroot.

## Did You Know

- Between 1612 and 1647 corn was sold, bartered and borrowed by count of ears. It was used as currency.
- When people got together to grind the corn, they would have "blolly" or loblolly feasts.
- The first bananas displayed in the 17th century in London, UK, were from Bermuda.
- The first salt maker in Bermuda was Ralph Garner who used Bermuda cedar to create salt pans.
- Matt Hooper is currently making his own salt at Bermuda Artisan Sea Salt in Dockyard.
- People used to create their own fishponds, known as crawls, in which they kept live fish.
- The first mention of tomatoes in Bermuda was 1850 when 10 boxes were sent to Bermuda from England. Called "apples of love" by botanist John Gerard, they were originally from South America.
- Kitchen implements, including those listed above, were considered so valuable they were bequeathed in wills.
- The first hamburger was made at the Phoenix where there was a restaurant in 1937. Mr. Virgil, who had worked abroad, introduced it.

## Key Terms

**Baking iron** or griddle– a flat, iron plate

**Cassava** – a root vegetable peeled and grated to make flour

**Corn** – maize although it was much harder than today's varieties and could not be eaten on the cob

**Corn flour** – corn kernels finely ground

**Cornmeal** – corn kernels coarsely ground

**Dutch oven** – otherwise known as a cake-kettle, it was a three-legged iron pot with vertical sides and a lid. It was placed on the kitchen fire but sometimes a fire could be laid on the lid as well for additional heat.

**Farine** – finely ground cassava flour

**Loblolly** – a gruel made out of cornmeal

**Plantain** – a type of banana

## Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. Why does Mr. Gibbons argue that food in the early years of the settlement was healthy? What unhealthy ingredients were not available then? What diseases fairly common in Bermuda today may not have been so prevalent then because of ingredients they did not have?
2. Have you ever caught fish, prepared and cooked them? If so, write an account of the process and experience.
3. Imagine you are cooking a meal in a kitchen during a summer in the 19th century. Write an account of the experience and include in your account details of how it would affect you physically.
4. Why do you think Crawl Hill in Hamilton Parish gained its name?
5. Why do you think Salt Kettle Inlet in Paget gained its name?
6. Research how other place and house names are derived from foods and plants.
7. How important is oral history to our understanding of our past? In what ways does it differ from history recounted in academic books? What advantages do oral recollections have? What disadvantages? (See Chapters Three and Four for recipes handed down.)
8. Conduct further research to explore the negative effects the demands for different foods and plants have had on people during the course of history. You might like to consider the following crops:

   Sugar
   Cotton
   Tea
   Cocoa

## Suggested Activities

1. Visit the kitchen garden in the Botanical Gardens. Make a list of herbs, fruits and vegetables grown there. Then research how you could include them in recipes.
2. Visit Carter House at Southside, St. David's to see a traditional kitchen.
3. Visit the National Trust properties, Verdmont in Smith's Parish and the Tucker House in St. George's, for a tour of the houses and of their gardens.
4. Learn more about how Matt Hooper makes artisan salt at Dockyard (**http://www.artisanseasalt.com/**)

# Chapter 2: Bermudian Cuisine

All three chefs featured in the documentary argue Bermuda has its own cuisine, which has evolved from ingredients imported to Bermuda or found and grown locally. **Papaya or Pawpaw Montespan**, for example, consists of locally grown pawpaw, boiled, sliced, seasoned with salt and pepper and layered into a casserole dish. Topped with cheese and/or breadcrumbs, it is baked in the oven. Some people like to incorporate ground beef sautéed with onions and spices. Pawpaws can also be used to make chutneys, jellies and jams, as can guavas, bay grape berries, Surinam cherries and loquats, much loved by Bermudians. Fruit syllabubs, crumbles and pies are popular desserts. Fruits can also be used to make liqueurs, such as Bermuda loquat liqueur, made by soaking whole loquats and a string of rock candy in a sealed jar filled with either rum or gin.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, seafood and fish caught in Bermuda have been used to create uniquely Bermudian dishes: conch stew, conch fritters, fried or baked snapper and Bermuda lobster served stuffed or thermidor. As Mr. Ming says in the documentary, Bermuda is the only country to prepare **hashed shark**. A whole shark, its liver removed, is cut into pieces, then boiled and skinned. The liver is slowly cooked in a heavy skillet until a lot of its oil is released. Some chefs squeeze the liver to release more oil and then fry it until crispy. The shark pieces are also squeezed. Then the dried shark flesh and liver are fried again in strained shark oil with a variety of chopped herbs, sweet and hot peppers (often Bermuda bird peppers) and seasoning. It is served with rice or with sweet potatoes. **Dried mullet roe** was a St. David's specialty that Ms Pitcher remembers. The whole roe was removed, salted overnight, pressed for several days and then hung on a line to dry. It was served with bread and butter.

## Outside influences

Bermudian diet has also been influenced by people of different nationalities coming to live and work on the island. Chapter Two shows how food prepared in Bermuda was influenced by the West Indies from the start because of plant seeds and cuttings brought on the *Edwin.* Enslaved West Indians taken to Bermuda during the 17th and 18th centuries brought their own recipes and West Indians coming to Bermuda after Emancipation would continue to do so. The British had an influence on food in Bermuda because they wanted the foods settlers coming to the island remembered from home – meals that centred on roast meats including beef, pork and mutton. In 1849 the Portuguese contribution to Bermuda's agriculture began when 58 Portuguese arrived from Madeira. Subsequently more Portuguese would arrive, mostly from the Azores, bringing their recipes for breads, cakes, doughnuts, chorizo sausage made from pork, and spicy soups and stews (see Chapter Four for more detail).

In some cases, Bermudians have taken an ingredient originating from elsewhere and then have incorporated it in a dish unique to Bermuda – cassava pie is the perfect example (see Christmas section in Chapter Four for details). Chopped Portuguese sausage is sometimes

included in a Bermudian version of peas and rice or Hoppin' John. Fish chowder is made in many other countries but as Mr. Ming says, it is usually cream-based and white. In Bermuda the chowder is brown because traditionally the cook would make a colouring by caramelising sugar in boiling water and by including black rum. But there are many variations of Bermuda fish chowder, depending on the hotness of spices and the kinds of herbs used. Nevertheless, it would be unthinkable not to offer rum and sherry pepper sauce as accompaniments.

In other cases, Bermudian cuisine results from combinations of foods from elsewhere. "Mac 'n' cheese" is served on practically every occasion, even on Christmas Day. Only in Bermuda will people couple a savoury, salty codfish cake with a sweet hot cross bun. Codfish is so much part of Bermuda's tradition, it should have its own section:

## Codfish

How is it that cod, fished and dried to our north in Canada, is so much part of Bermudian diet? While cod is not fished in Bermuda, the islanders' liking for it goes back to when Bermudian mariners raked for salt in the Turks Islands during the 17th century (see Chapter Two). The rakers would take the salt up to Newfoundland where they would sell it to codfish businesses who caught and dried the fish and who would use the salt to preserve it. Bermudian mariners would bring salted codfish back to Bermuda where it became a staple, inexpensive meal. Today, for many families a codfish breakfast is mandatory on Sunday mornings although they will often eat it any day of the week. Soaked in water overnight, the fish is boiled until flaky. The sauces and accoutrements served with codfish are what make the dish Bermudian. Indeed, Bermudians themselves argue about which are the most authentic as recipes have been handed down in families from generation to generation. Most agree that the breakfast should be served with boiled potatoes, sliced avocado pear and sliced bananas. Some like to fry their bananas. Others like to serve the meal with a spicy, garlicy tomato sauce, perhaps related to a Portuguese sauce typically served with snapper. A sauce made of melted butter with chopped boiled egg added is *the* sauce for traditionalists. Another white sauce is roux-based, again with chopped boiled egg added. Some cooks like to add steamed sliced onions to the meal, others drizzle olive oil over the meal. (See Good Friday section of Chapter Four for Codfish cake recipes.) Ironically, salted codfish is not the inexpensive meal it once was. Today, it is more expensive than ground beef.

## Where can Bermudian Cuisine be Sampled?

Both Mr. Ming and Mr. Gibbons agree there is no restaurant devoted wholly to Bermudian dishes, although many restaurants and cafes do feature some Bermudian recipes, especially a Bermuda codfish breakfast. Traditional Bermudian food is served at weddings, private parties and picnics, at church social functions and fairs. Cricket games, especially at Cup Match, also have food stands. The Bermuda Day Parade is an ideal opportunity for people to enjoy Bermuda food (see Chapter Four). Sometimes there will be stands offering West Indian dishes such as curried goat and Jamaican patties, or Portuguese red bean soup, malasadas, sweetbread and cakes. In addition, Bermudian breads and cakes and sauces are made by Mrs. Julie Smith at Windybank Farm in Smith's Parish, Bermuda.

## Some Bermuda Foods and Sauces Exports

Horton's Original Bermuda Black Rum Cake

The Bermuda Rum Cake Company

Outerbridge's Original Sherry Peppers

Outerbridge's Bermuda Fish Chowder

Gosling's Bermuda Gold Loquat Liqueur

Gosling's Original Gold Rum

Gosling's Black Seal Rum

Gosling's Gold Seal Rum

Gosling's Dark 'n' Stormy

Gosling's Ginger Beer

Barritt's Ginger Beer

Bermuda Jam Factory

## Did You Know

- Loquats have not always been in Bermuda. Governor William Reid introduced them to Bermuda in 1850. Surinam cherries were probably introduced by 1840.
- In 1849, 58 Portuguese people, including 16 women and 7 children, arrived from Madeira on Captain Benjamin Watlington's brigatine, *Golden Rule*. Subsequently, waves of Portuguese workers from the Azores would come to Bermuda but were unable to bring their families with them.
- In 1968 Dennis Lamb opened an unusual restaurant in his own home – Dennis's Hideaway in Cashew City, St. David's. He ran it for 35 years. Prospective customers would call to check if the restaurant would be open that evening. Bringing their own drink, they would arrive to find him stirring his stews made of the fish he had caught that day. Depending on his catches, diners could partake of shark hash on toast, conch fritters, mussel stew, conch stew, fish chowder, fried fish, conch steak, shark steak, shrimp, and scallops.
- A favourite with boating diners and many locals, the Black Horse Tavern was owned by Gary Lamb and was opposite Smiths Island in St. David's. Its menu included shark hash, peas and rice, conch stew and mussel pies. The building is still there but sadly it has closed.
- British sailors for centuries added hot peppers to barrels of sherry, thus creating a seasoning that would make their ship rations more palatable. During the 19th century Bermudians would trade their hot bird peppers for sherry.

### Questions for Writing and Discussion

1. What Bermudian dishes would you recommend to visitors coming to Bermuda?
2. What would you say are Bermuda's most traditional dishes? Have you and your family ever prepared them?
3. Have you had dishes in Bermuda that you have not seen prepared in countries anywhere else? If so, what are they?
4. Do you think a restaurant featuring solely Bermudian dishes could survive economically? Why or why not?
5. Imagine you are going to set up a restaurant specializing in Bermudian cuisine. Create a menu and a business plan. Why would you need to think about business relationships with local farmers and bakeries?

# Chapter 3: Bermudian Holidays and Festivals

Because Bermuda has had, and continues to have, a diverse workforce, many Bermudians are happy to join celebrations of other cultures. So, for example, they may celebrate the Diwali, the Hindu Festival of Lights held in October/November. Some Bermudians celebrate the Canadian Thanksgiving Day in October while others opt for the American Thanksgiving date in November. It's not unknown for Bermudians to join both Thanksgiving celebrations. In addition, some locals can celebrate the Chinese New Year. But this chapter will focus on official Bermudian holidays and festivals and describe the foods traditionally served. Bermuda's official religion was Christianity from its first settlement so it is unsurprising that many holidays are connected to dates in the Christian calendar. Nevertheless, the foods served at Christmas often have a uniquely Bermudian twist. Other holidays are secular, some celebrating a historical event or an important date.

## Shrove Tuesday or Pancake Day

Shrove Tuesday is the day before Lent, a forty-day period of self-denial when Christians refrain from eating foods they most particularly like, especially meat. In the past on Shrove Tuesday they would eat fats and eggs forbidden during Lent and have a last celebration before Easter. **Pancakes** made from eggs, flour and milk batter were the ideal fare. As explained in Chapter Two, batters in Bermuda before the arrival of white flour were made with cornflour or cornmeal. Today there are many pancake options in addition to cornmeal ones. American pancakes, whose batter contains baking powder and soda to make them fluffy, are served with butter, maple syrup and sometimes with fried bacon. English pancakes are thinner and are served with lemon and sugar, while potato pancakes include grated potato and onion.

The Portuguese often make **malasadas**, Portuguese doughnuts that are cakes of dough made with many eggs and fried and coated with sugar.

## Good Friday

On this public holiday, kite flying is the pastime of the day with kites preferably being authentically Bermudian – that is, constructed with wooden sticks and pieces of coloured tissue paper arranged in intricate designs. Tails concocted out of old bed sheets and rags keep the kites up and steady. Horseshoe Bay is the place to go for the Kite Flying Festival.

It is on Good Friday that codfish cakes are made and served with sweet hot cross buns (see Chapter Three). Codfish cakes are basically made with a mixture of codfish, cooked after being soaked in water overnight; mashed potato; chopped onion and parsley; and thyme. The mixture, bound by a beaten egg, is formed into cakes which are then coated with flour and fried in oil until golden brown. But recipes for them differ throughout the island, partly because the ratio of fish to potato varies. Some Bermudians like a fishy cake,

while others prefer a greater proportion of potato. Some like additional ingredients, such as chopped fried bacon (not appropriate for those who will eat only fish on Good Friday), chopped celery and a pinch of curry powder. However, everyone agrees that lots of thyme is vital. The cakes can be served with banana, hardboiled eggs and baked beans cooked with chopped bacon, chopped onion and molasses, or ketchup. Hot cross buns can be ordered from bakeries but some people like to make their own. Made with a variety of spices, raisins or currants and citron, their tops are marked with a cross made of icing or pastry. Peas and rice, potato salad, and coleslaw are also often served.

## Easter Sunday

Easter Sunday commemorates Christ's resurrection so some people attend church or sunrise Easter services on Elbow Beach in Paget. A codfish and potatoes breakfast is often served in the morning while a family dinner might consist of a roast ham served with roast potatoes and vegetables, as well as macaroni and cheese. Some families include **cassava pie** on the menu (see **Christmas Day** below.) At Easter the Portuguese make a delicious sweetbread made out of flour, at least 12 eggs, sugar, yeast and fat. It can be shaped into loaves or braided but it also has raw eggs in their shells placed in the dough. Usually there is one egg for each member of the family. The eggs, sometimes dyed, cook with the bread. The top of the dough can be brushed with egg and chopped almonds before being baked. Portuguese mothers often keep their sweetbread recipes secret before handing them down to their daughters.

## Bermuda Agricultural Show

Held over a three-day period in April, the Agricultural Exhibition features Bermudian dishes, breads and candies submitted by adults and children for judging.

## May 24 or Bermuda Day

On this public holiday, Bermudians traditionally have their first swim of the year so it is seen as the first day of summer. The May 24 Bermuda Marathon race in the morning (alternate years Somerset to Hamilton/St. George's to Hamilton) is open to local and international runners and cyclists. Spectators line the course to cheer on the participants, especially the stragglers. In the afternoon the Bermuda Day Parade takes place in the City of Hamilton. Flower floats, marching bands, majorettes and the Bermuda Gombeys are all part of the fun. The parade ends at the City Hall car park where many stands offer refreshments and Bermuda cuisine (see Chapter Three). The first Bermuda Fitted Dinghy Race of the season is held in St. George's. But for many people the holiday is an opportunity for family picnics and barbeques on the beach. Outdoor grills are used for cooking fish, chicken, hamburgers etc. Macaroni and cheese, peas and rice and many different salads are part of the feasts.

## Bermuda Cup Match

This public holiday unique to Bermuda is held on the Thursday and Friday before the first Monday in August. The St. George's and Somerset Cricket Clubs compete in this crucial cricket game of the year. But the holiday is not just about cricket – it's about a carnival atmosphere, food, fashion (especially hats), and gambling. When spectators are not roaring support for their favoured side, they are taking their chances at the Crown and Anchor gaming tables. Cup Match also has historical significance since the Thursday commemorates Emancipation Day, which marked the ending of slavery in 1834. Friday, Somers Day, commemorates Sir George Somers, a British admiral and privateer whose shipwreck on Bermuda' reefs inadvertently started our first settlement.

The event is held either in St. George's or in Somerset and food stands offering Bermudian food, particularly fried fresh local fish, curried mussel pie, conch stew and fritters, shark hash and spicy fish chowder, are very much part of the scene. For years Dolly Pitcher's food stand was a magnet (see Chapters One, Two and Three).

The Cup Match holiday is also a time when many Bermudians like to camp in tents near the ocean. Again, a vast amount of food is prepared and barbequed.

## Guy Fawkes Day – November 5

This day, commemorating the failure of Guy Fawkes and his conspirators to blow up the Houses of Parliament in England, is no longer widely celebrated in Bermuda. But as Mr. Ming says, it was once enjoyed by many since it was an opportunity for setting off fireworks and for burning effigies of Guy Fawkes in bonfires. He remembers that sweet potatoes were very much part of the celebration, especially sweet potato pudding which Ms Pitcher described in the film. Mashed cooked sweet potatoes, combined with salt, baking powder and cinnamon, raisins and milk are added to creamed butter, Crisco, brown sugar and eggs. The mixture is baked in a container. Sweet potato pancakes, fritters, cakes, rolls and biscuits were also offered.

## Christmas Day

Christmas Day is an important celebration for Christians since it commemorates the birth of Christ. But it is also a secular celebration. For everyone it is an opportunity to decorate trees (in the old days, a cedar branch), to listen to music, to give and receive presents and, of course, to eat and drink. Many of the dishes served in Bermuda on Christmas Day – for example roast turkey, roast beef, lamb or baked ham, and Christmas pudding – are similar to those served in other countries such as the US, Canada and the UK. But one dish is absolutely unique to Bermuda and an absolute Christmas must: **cassava (or farine) pie.** (See Chapter One for cassava preparation)

In fact the pie is more cake than pie, but a cake filled with cooked chicken and/or cooked pork. There are innumerable recipes for cassava pie within Bermuda – some families keep their recipes completely secret, choosing one custodian to hand them down to the next generation. But all recipes incorporate large numbers of eggs, copious amounts of butter and sugar and broth, as well as spices and flavourings. Some pies have a crumbly texture, while others are moister, according to taste.

## Boxing Day

The day after Christmas, this public holiday is an opportunity to relax after the excitement of Christmas. It is also the time to make dishes out of the previous day's leftovers. Cassava pie is often sliced and fried in butter. Other dishes include turkey and ham rice, curried turkey, turkey à la King, pumpkin and rice.

While the Gombeys appear at most Bermudian holidays, traditionally Boxing Day was the occasion when everybody listened out for their drumbeat and whistle.

## New Year's Day

For many Bermudians, the start of the New Year means dried green split peas cooked in simmering water with a smoked ham hock, onions, carrots, potatoes, and lots of thyme. For a Portuguese twist, chorizo can be added.

## Did You Know ?

- The word "Shrove" is derived from "shrive" which means to confess and be forgiven of sins.
- Mardi Gras means Fat Tuesday.
- Traditionally, kites would be made out of dried fennel sticks and brown paper as the tissue and bought sticks used today were too expensive. Often the sticks would be placed in the shape of a crucifix.
- It is believed a Sunday school teacher started the Good Friday kite flying tradition to illustrate to children the ascension of Christ.
- After Emancipation, men from Somerset and St. George's met in friendly rivalry and held celebrations of Emancipation by holding annual picnics to mark the anniversary of the abolition of slavery. One of the highlights from the picnics was a friendly cricket match played between Friendly Societies from the east and west ends of the island. In 1901, during a cricket match between two major Friendly Societies, an agreement was made to play for an annual trophy.
- In Britain servants and tradespeople would have the day off after Christmas Day and would receive "boxes" of gifts or gratuities from their employers or customers. Thus the name "Boxing Day".

### Questions for Writing and Discussion

1. Why do you think food is associated with celebration? Is it an important part of celebrating for you? What are your family's favourite dishes? What are your favourite holidays?
2. Why can there be different versions of the same dishes – for example, cassava pie or codfish cakes? Think of as many reasons as possible.
3. How do you celebrate the Cup Match holiday? What are the most important aspects of it for you? Write a letter to a pen friend abroad explaining what it is all about.
4. Do you have a special recipe handed down through the generations to your family? Who in the family knows the recipe, and why were they chosen as the "custodians" of the tradition?
5. Think about traditions – their advantages and disadvantages. Do they bring people together? In what ways can they be exclusive rather than inclusive? Can they be cruel? If so, is the cruelty justified? Can you think of examples where a tradition can stultify social progress?

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GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Ministry of Social Development and Sports
**Department of Community and Cultural Affairs**

#58 Court Street, 4th Floor, Hamilton HM 12, Bermuda
**Tel: 441.292.1681 • Website: www.communityandculture.bm**