

OUTLANDISH READING FOR YOUR SUMMER'S EVE

BY DEBORAH QUAILE
ARTS EDITOR

With over three million books in print, Diana Gabaldon has transformed herself from a respected scientist to an internationally bestselling author who's a publishing phenomenon. After the remarkable success of her first historical novel, *Outlander*, Gabaldon's fans eagerly await the release of each successive book.

Doubleday Canada recently released *The Outlandish Companion: In Which Much is Revealed Regarding Claire and Jamie Fraser, Their Lives and Times, Antecedents, Adventures, Companions and Progeny, With Learned Commentary (And Many Footnotes) by Their Humble Creator*. The title of the hefty 577 page hardcover certainly provides insight into the author's sense of humour.

Inside the lavishly decorated book are treasures for every Gabaldon fan. There are 11 sections, including synopses of novels, characters, family trees, a glossary of Gaelic grammar and foreign terminology, many FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions), an annotated bibliography and appendixes. Probably the most compelling reading will be the eagerly awaited excerpts from her work in progress.

Gabaldon wanted to compile the companion for readers, stating, "[It's] a quick reference for those who don't necessarily want to reread a million and a half words in order to refresh their memories as to Who or What; a source of information and (maybe) insight on the characters, a companion for those with an interest in backgrounds and trivia; an auxiliary guide for those with an interest in the 18th century and Things Scottish, and finally - a brief glimpse into the working methods of a warped mind."

The Outlandish Companion is pleasantly witty. Gabaldon's writing includes

lavish description and excellent dialogue to propel the reader through complex story lines. She has raised the level of her genre by appealing to the intelligence and imagination of all readers.

"I know a lot of people do all the research and then begin to write," Gabaldon reveals, "but that wouldn't work for me - since I never know what's going to happen, I wouldn't know where to stop researching! So I don't - I read and research all the time I'm writing... I have about 200 books that belong to the university library (every so often they want one back, which is a traumatic experience) and I buy them like salted peanuts."

The book is embellished with many photographs (some of standing stones, as on the cover), computer illustrations, and pen and ink drawings, many of which were rendered by Dr. James Brickell, who emigrated from Scotland to North Carolina in 1733, and captured the flora and fauna he found en route on paper.

The "Jamie and Claire" stories, as they are often referred to, tell the tale of a long and prosperous marriage, not just a courtship and its sexual conclusion ("In that order, we hope," Gabaldon jests). Her characters grow and change; they are not the same old people, which is what makes her stories so compelling.

Next up on her list of works will be *The Fiery Cross*, the fifth book in the *Outlander* series, *Sons of Liberty*, a tentative title for the sixth book, and *White Knight*, the tentative title of her first contemporary mystery.

"I think the *Outlander* books will end in 1800. If this tells you anything, more power to you. And yes, the last book will have a happy ending, though I confidently expect it to leave the readers in floods of tears, anyway," she remarks.

THE OUTLANDISH COMPANION
DIANA GABALDON
DOUBLEDAY CANADA, TORONTO,
1999.
HARDCOVER, \$37.95
ISBN 0-385-25739-2



Quaile
Reviews

Idle



Pursuits

PLUCKING THE BERRY BOUNTY

BY DEBORAH QUAILE
ARTS EDITOR

Without a doubt, one of the most pleasurable summer occupations is spending time in an abundant garden, whether your own or at a pick-your-own farm.

My grandmother's dream was for self-sufficiency on their family farm. She kept a large garden in Dixie, Ontario which provided the family meals during the summer when grandfather's teaching salary wasn't coming in. Later, she and my grandfather purchased our farm in Hornby, where they grew a variety of fruits, vegetables and raised fowl.

My mother told me how they picked raspberries when she was younger. Raspberries were relatively easy, she felt, because you didn't have to stoop down, as with strawberries, and she and her brother and sister could thread their belts through little wooden quart baskets, buckle up the belt around their waist and pick two-handed. It sounded like a great system to me, but we don't have quart baskets any more. I also tend to crawl around on my hands and knees looking up for sneaky berries that hide under leaves, so I'd be sure to spill all mine.

I love raspberries. However, my canes are an unfortunate lot because I've never been able to lavish a great deal of care on them. From the initial eight canes that I mail-ordered from a seed house - two of which expired shortly after I got them in the

ground - I now have three abundant rows, and more leafy sprouts popping up from the lawn all the time. Enough was enough, and a short time ago I had to get in the berry patch to hack, weed, chop, pull and stake my way back to some semblance of order. After an hour and a half, I emerged from the tangle with several red smears on my face and T-shirt, and scratches oozing on my arms and legs. It looked as if I got the worst of a fight with five wildcats, but I'm sure the triumphant grin and the heaped three litre basket truly announced who was the winner.

If this is how raspberries flourished without care, having grown to 12-foot heights with fruits the size of large thimbles dangling from the ends, what would they have produced after expert trimming? My crop flops outside its weakly imposed order and I must edge carefully through the midst, yet I probably enjoy the experience all the more for its challenge. Hidden under the bushes in my own sun-dappled cave, I pick some and eat some. I've made friends with a large knobby toad who dines on the insect population under there, and my son thinks it's a great place to sit and think - like a secret clubhouse. Even my dog joins me every now and then, gently nibbling the ripest raspberries from their stems, trying to figure out

exactly why I love the bright, tangy fruit.

I am, in fact, rather protective of my raspberries. Early one morning, I chased a flock of feathered thieves from the patch, shouting, "Shoo! Shoo!" as I tore across the dewy lawn in my night attire. Luckily, we have a good growth of trees around the house which hopefully sheltered the neighbours from my unusual antics. The birds, however, just flew up into the spruce canopy and chuckled. I thought I had the last laugh when I left the dog on guard to dissuade further infringement, but as I looked out the dining room window later on, I noticed her sneaking a few berries of her own.

On a hot, lazy summer afternoon as the cicadas sing in my ears there's nothing I like better than picking my own raspberries. It could be the challenge of plucking them from thorny canes that don't willingly give up their bounty, or the feel of the sun on my arms.

I take the ruby-red jewels into the kitchen, rinse them and check for bugs that may be hiding inside, and then turn the whole day's picking into a pie whose fragrance permeates the house with the aroma of golden crust and berry juice.

As I cut a lavish slice and plopp a scoop of smooth vanilla ice cream beside it, I come to realize exactly what I love about raspberries the most.

It's the flavour.

THE GREAT CANADIAN BREWING FESTIVAL

GET YOUR CLUB INVOLVED!

BY DEBORAH QUAILE
ARTS EDITOR

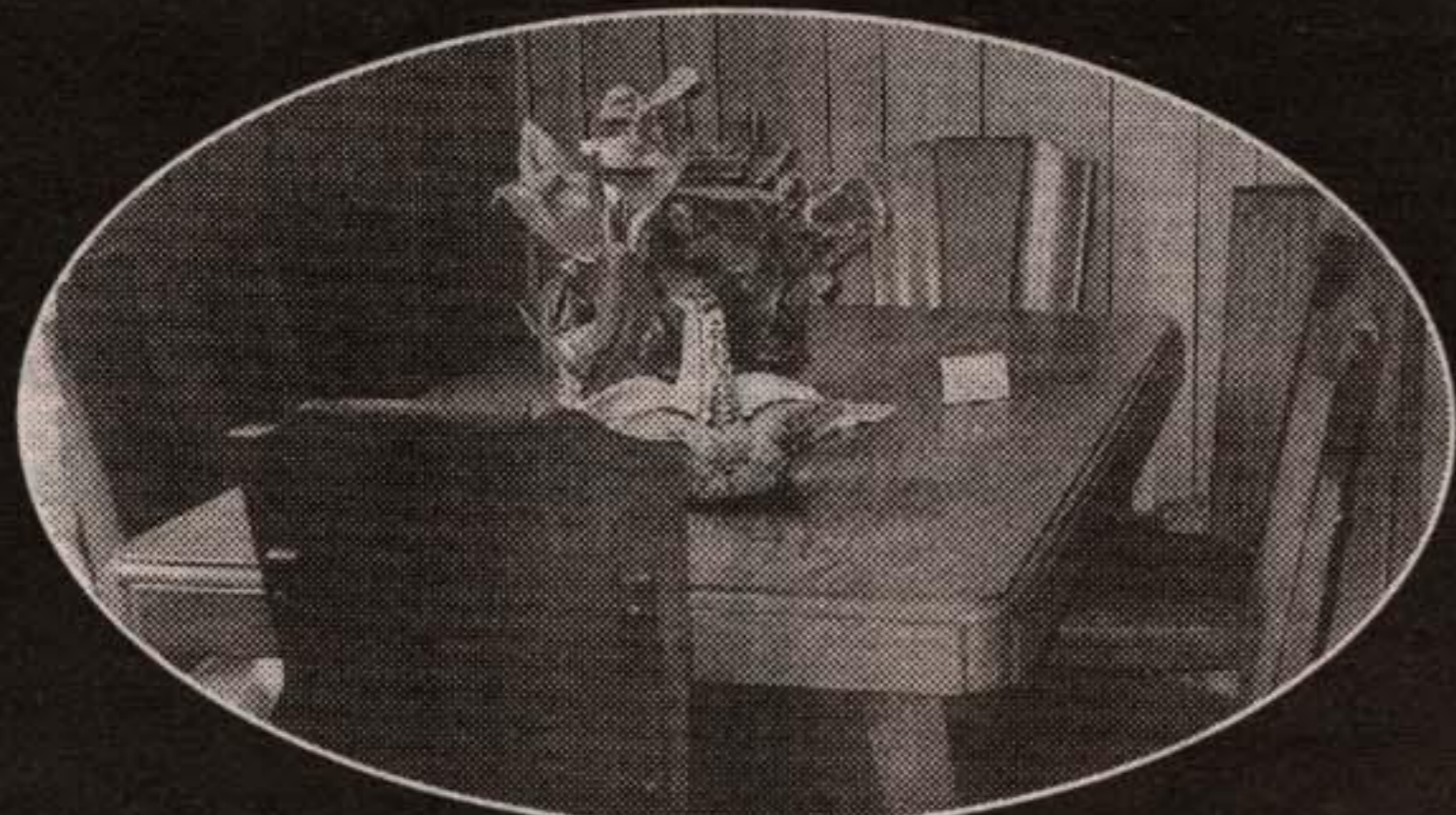
The fourth annual Great Canadian Brewing Festival, hosted by the University of Guelph, will showcase over 200 different beers from over 50 different breweries. The festival is a friendly atmosphere in which to sample a wide variety of finely crafted ales, lagers and specialty beer. It's been growing steadily for the past three years with 1998's attendance surpassing 10,000 visitors.

The Great Canadian Brewing Festival encompasses all aspects of beer and brewing, and features a unique opportunity for attendees to interact with brewers, beer historians, aficionados, memorabilia collectors, and beer culinary exhibitors.

New to this year's festival will be the Community Club Night, which takes place on Friday, September 17 from 4 to 11 p.m. Tickets are \$12, with \$1.50 from each ticket donated to the charity of the Community Club's choice. Should your club be interested in attending, please contact event manager Amy Savage at (519) 824-4120, ext. 2219. Large groups and buses are welcome.

The Great Canadian Brewing Festival runs Thursday, September 16, 7 p.m. to midnight; Friday, September 17, 4 to 11 p.m.; Saturday, September 18, 2 to 11 p.m. General admission is \$12 (19 years of age and older).

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