



## An Icelandic Culinary Adventure

by Deborah Quaile

Coastline Publishing of Guelph has recently released *The Culinary Saga of New Iceland: Recipes from the Shores of Lake Winnipeg*. It's a compilation of traditional Icelandic recipes as prepared by the first Icelandic settlers in "New Iceland" (also known as Manitoba's Interlake region). This was the largest Icelandic settlement in North America, and still has many descendants living in the area.

Coastline Publishing is a family affair, comprised of Dundas author Kristin Olafson-Jenkyns, husband Mark Jenkyns and her son mackenzie kristjón of Eden Mills. mackenzie confides that the "corporate headquarters of Coastline Publishing is really in his living room."

When Icelandic families immigrated to New Iceland in 1875, they had to adapt recipes and cooking methods to indigenous ingredients of their new environment. Gradually, availability of other ingredients and interaction with different ethnic groups evolved into new recipes and traditions.

"My initial motivation for creating this book," the author relates, "was to compile a small collection of favourite traditional recipes for my children and nieces. The collection grew incrementally over a number of years as other Icelandic descendants offered recipes and encouragement."

While experimenting with these dishes, Ms. Olafson-Jenkyns was reminded of the warm hospitality that she felt as a member of the Icelandic community.

"The foods we choose to eat provide more than physical sustenance. The cooking of food, like fine art or music, is emblematic of cultural tradition and as such serves to foster our identities."

Even when women were no longer so concerned with food preparation and preservation (through the use of stoves and refrigerators), Icelandic families continued to prepare the same dishes "with a love and respect for their tradition," Kristin comments. "Hopefully the retention of these recipes will serve to foster the spirit of hospitality and the love of social entertainment that has always characterized the Icelanders."

As well as an introduction to New World Settlements and the

founding of New Iceland, the thick book runs through categories such as Lake Winnipeg Fish, Meats and Soups, Desserts, Bread, Cakes and Cookies, and Refreshing Drinks. For the uninitiated, she includes a phonetics section at the back to help make sense of the fascinating accents.

Early local cookbooks (one circa 1915), the New Icelandic newspaper Framfari (1877-79), and recipes from friends and relatives were the sources of inspiration. Interestingly, the types of recipes are identified by backdrops on the pages: articles from the Framfari are sent on their Icelandic newspaper source, recipes from the Matreiðslubók (Recipe Book) are set on handwritten pages from the original, and the author's later innovations are set on photographs of beach pebbles.

As with many old "demonstrative" styles of cooking - using a "handful" or "pinch" - many family recipes had to be taken into modern exact measures. Honest comments from Icelandic descendants and often non-Icelandic spouses follow each recipe, and give their own particular flavour to the work.

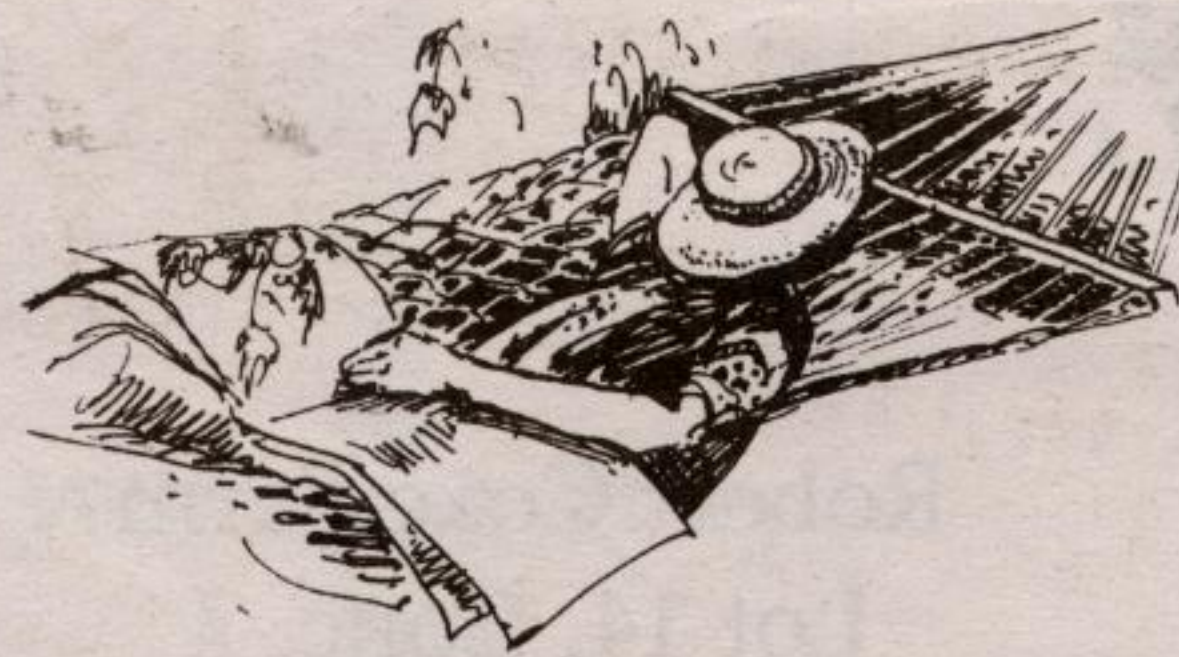
Granted, some of the recipes are not for everyday use, such as Svið (sheephead) - but are important for historic purposes. And as Ms. Olafson-Jenkyns adds, it's "a delicacy unlikely to have mass appeal."

Many of the items, however, will have a broad welcome from food aficionados, like the creamy rice pudding, rich brown bread, smoked fish appetizers or saddle of venison. Photos illustrate the book as a reference, but not of the dishes. As a bonus, a quick history of the area and settlers has been provided. Altogether, *The Culinary Saga of New Iceland: Recipes from the Shores of Lake Winnipeg* is very nicely put together - a gem to sit down and savour.

The book is available in Guelph at The Bookshelf, in Toronto at The Cookbook Store, and otherwise through [www.coastline-publishing.com](http://www.coastline-publishing.com).

**The Culinary Saga of New Iceland: Recipes from the Shores of Lake Winnipeg**  
 Kristin Olafson-Jenkyns  
 Guelph: Coastline Publishing, 2001  
 ISBN 0-9689119-0-0  
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# Idle



# Pursuits

## Putting the past behind: A Review of A Ghost of a Chance

by Deborah Quaile

Who would have thought that a dead man would have a ghost of a chance of winning his wife back?

Yet that's exactly what this ghost, the ephemeral presence of Chance, tries to accomplish. During a two-day span of time, at a little hunting cabin in the woods, the lives of several people change considerably.

When Bethany brings her new fiancé Floyd and his mother Verna - both of whom are a little bit bizarre themselves - to the cabin where her husband died, instead of exorcising the spectre of his death, she begins to see her husband Chance's ghost.

Chance is surprised to find out he is dead, killed three years earlier when hunting "Bambi." He can't feel, smell, and is "stuck for eternity in blue paisley" (the tie he detested that his wife buried him in).

To rid the cabin of the ghost and send her former husband on his way to the light, Bethany brings in a psychic, Crystal, that she found in the phonebook.

But even Crystal cannot make Chance move on, as he considers staying on his 7½ acres with his secret. Meanwhile, through some misunderstandings when Crystal is acting as medium, Floyd and Verna come to believe that Crystal is in love with Bethany. When Chance's accountant walks in trying to buy the property and will stop at nothing to get it, the whole weekend becomes a fiasco.



A Ghost of a Chance

Although it's difficult to pull off ghostly effects without fancy camera tricks, the troop does so admirably, mostly due to the work of actor Bill Smith. Through time, Chance gradually gains substance and finds it harder to leave this world - "I've always been a quick healer," he states.

The other characters gain strength too, especially Bethany, played by Trish Starodub, and Floyd, by Dana MacInnis.

Ms. Starodub brings her character to fullness by beginning with the bright, beautiful Bethany who has absolutely no self-esteem, and leading her through this series of misadventures that strengthen and prove that she can stand on her own.

Mr. MacInnis' treatment of Floyd was superb, with the whiny, wimpy dentist, a mama's boy who was forced to carry around his dead father's ashes in an urn for his mother, eventually growing into a man who realizes that life is a short-lived gift. The amount of living that each person chooses is entirely up to them, and as Floyd comes to believe in himself and others, wonderful possibilities open up.

Joan Howell was a natural as the mother who had problems of her own - although she'd never admit it. Ms. Howell made Verna appear vulnerable, attempting to grasp living with strength and independence in a changing world. In her day, none of these unusual events would ever happen!

Rick Renaud nicely added the character of Adam Lucas, the unbalanced accountant who just wanted the property for his own gains.


Ann Stevenson Macrae played a delightfully "kooky" psychic and had the audience guessing what her own secret must be - which turned out to be better than they suspected.

As Chance, Bill Smith made a marvelous outdoorsman, a strong and somewhat overbearing person that had overrun his wife for years. But even as a ghost, he learned to grow and give up on his secret. Questions raised on love, commitment, and life decisions offered insight into how precious life can be, even when delivered through hilarious one-liners.

*A Ghost of a Chance* is well written, superbly acted, and very well directed by The Theatre Downstairs' John Snowdon.

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