

This week in fire

Everyone knows when forests burn trees are destroyed. But the damage caused by wildfire in Ontario's forests ranges far beyond the number of trees lost.

Economic loss is most obvious. Without trees we would not have the many paper and wood products that we use daily at home, work and school. These products vary from tissue and towel to furniture, from newspapers to building material in our houses.

Consider numerous other goods not recognizable as wood products, but originating from tree species growing here in Ontario: paint, lacquer, soap,

polishes, cleaning fluid, tanning acid, charcoal, fuelwood, drugs, gum, confections, wood alcohol, building materials and even soil conditioners. The list is far from exhaustive but gives some idea of the variety of products derived from wood fibre and its oils.

This wide array of wood products forms the basis for numerous small businesses and large scale industries across the province. They employ thousands of people. Thus, a disruption of wood supplies to local mills, for example, can be a severe economic blow to a community.

Fire causes more direct social disruption when it poses an

immediate danger to human life and resources. Disrupted commercial transportation, highway, rail or air service is inconvenient and expensive. Even a temporary evacuation can be a traumatic experience for a family. Actual loss of property or life is devastating.

Less obvious, but no less important are long term effects, such as the loss of vast scenic vistas, harmful to local tourism industry. It depends heavily on healthy, green forests, clean lakes and rivers that supply abundant fish and wildlife.

Further long term damage results from large scale soil ero-

sion. Rain fall, running unchecked over barren, scorched earth carries off soil particles and ash into water systems. This further robs the land of soil and nutrients while damaging water quality and fish stocks.

Wildfires also destroy young trees-- our forests of tomorrow. Fires can change a forest of valued species into one of inferior "weed" trees such as cherry, willow and birch. Repeated fires can delay or prevent new forests from becoming established.

In addition to these commercial, ecological and psychological impacts, forest fires result in

major fire-fighting expenditures every year. Close to 35 million dollars is annually committed to forest fire control in Ontario. Added to this cost is lost revenue in the form of stumpage fees (tax paid by harvesting companies for the use of provincial trees). Regeneration of burned areas is another consideration. These hidden costs of wildfire can easily double the amount spent on fire control.

Don't be careless with matches, cigarettes or campfires. Think of the possible costs for which you might be responsible. We all lose when a forest burns.

A savory summer feast with a touch of pizzazz

Don't allow the heat of summer to stop you from enjoying an elegant feast. These easy-to-prepare recipes will give any meal the extra cool boost it deserves.

The following two recipes are excerpted from *The New York Times Cook Book* (revised edition), by Craig Claiborne (Harper & Row).

SALMON VERTE (6 servings)

- 1/3 cup dry white wine
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/4 teaspoon peppercorns
- 1/2 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3 (8-ounce) salmon steaks (about 1 inch thick)
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped chives
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley

- 2 tablespoons finely chopped cooked spinach
- Cucumber and tomato slices (optional)

1. In a large skillet bring to a boil the wine, lemon juice, water, peppercorns, bay leaf and salt. Add the salmon steaks, cover, and poach for 5 to 8 minutes, or until the salmon flakes easily when tested with a fork. Cool. Drain the salmon and arrange it on a serving dish.

2. Combine the mayonnaise, chives, parsley and spinach and spoon over the salmon. Chill. Garnish with cucumber and tomato slices, if desired.

WILD RICE WITH SNOW PEAS (4 servings)

- 1 cup wild rice
- 2 scallions
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups or more chicken stock
- 1/4 pound snow peas

- 4 large mushrooms
- 1 (4-ounce) can water chestnuts, drained
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1/4 cup toasted almonds

1. Wash the rice thoroughly, changing the water several times. Cut the green part of the scallions diagonally into 2-inch lengths. Chop the white part of the scallions fine.

2. Melt the butter in a large saucepan. Add the minced white part of the scallions and sauté until tender. Add the rice, salt and 2 cups stock. Bring to a boil, stir once and reduce the heat. Cover tightly and cook over low heat until the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed, about 35 minutes. If necessary add more stock as the rice cooks.

3. Meanwhile, remove the ends and strings from the peas. Cut the mushrooms and water chestnuts into thin slices.

4. Heat the oil in a large skillet. Add the green part of the scallions, peas, mushrooms and water chestnuts and sauté only until the mushrooms are tender.

5. Transfer the cooked rice and vegetable mixture to a casserole. Add salt and pepper and sprinkle with almonds. Mix lightly and keep hot for serving in a very low oven.

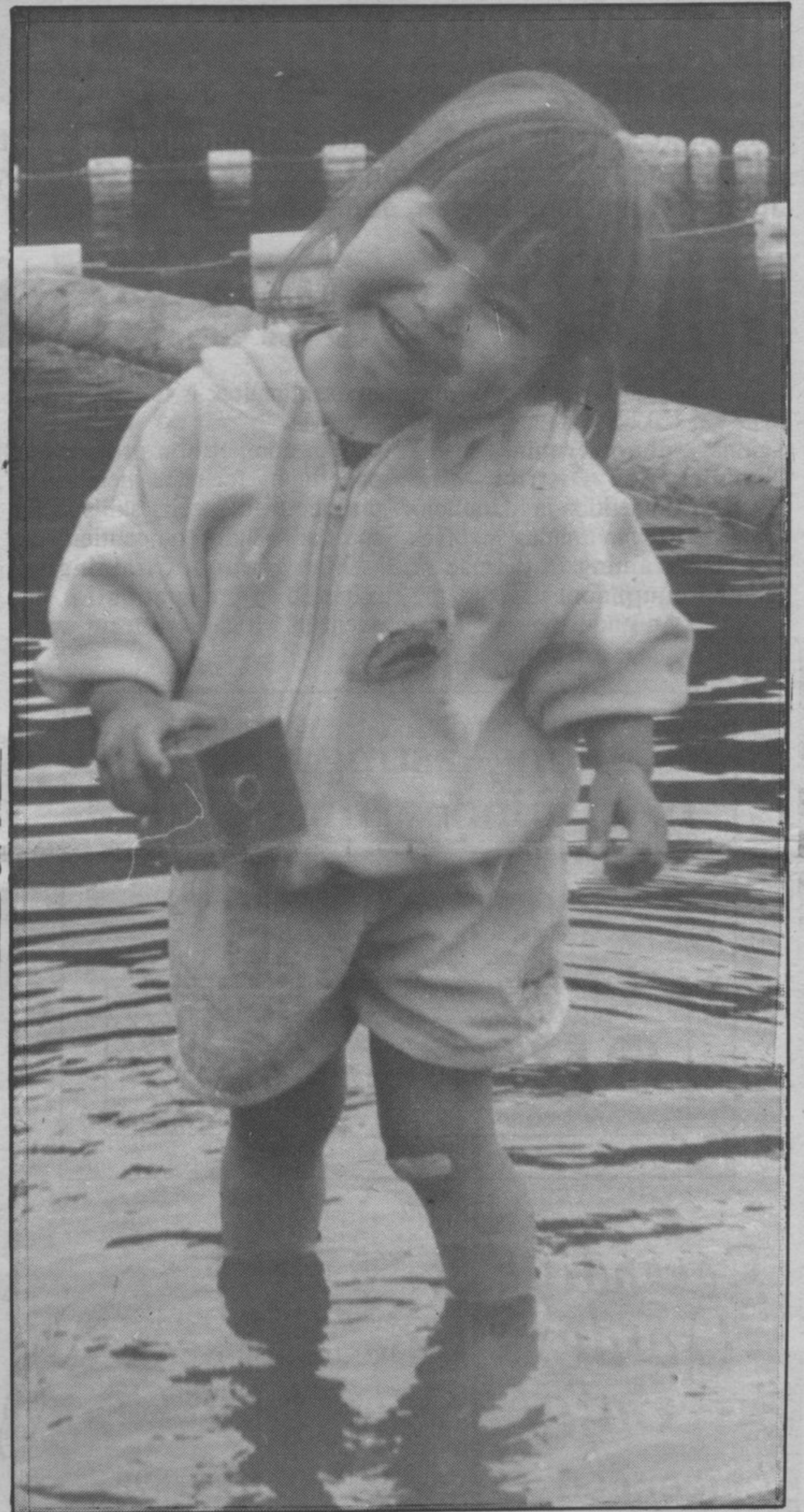
The following recipe is excerpted from *Betty Crocker's Best Recipes for Sensational Desserts* (Prentice Hall).

RASPBERRY-CURRENT SAUCE

- 1/2 cup currant jelly
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 cup fresh or loose pack frozen raspberries

Mix jelly and cornstarch in 1-quart saucepan; stir in raspberries. Heat to boiling, stirring constantly. Boil and stir 1 minute. Press through sieve to remove seeds. Cool at room temperature.

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Lisa Rioux tests the water at Rainbow Falls Provincial Park. Photo by Monica Wenzlaff



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