

Farm Wife Preserved Fruit By Drying It In Old Style Dutch Oven

While the men were busy at cider making, the women folk were busily engaged in household tasks of drying fruit, making butter and soap besides 1,001 other chores.

On our farm we used a Dutch oven for drying fruit. This type oven is almost as interesting as the fruit drying process.

The Dutch oven originated and was widely used in Pennsylvania. You will realize its necessity when I tell you that there were no iron stoves with large ovens when my maternal grandparents, Pennsylvania Dutch Mennonites, came to Ontario to operate the farm.

Cooking was done in pots and pans over open fireplaces. To bake bread, cakes and pies the ingenious pioneers built large outside ovens and fireplaces combined.

The one on our farm was used occasionally when I was a boy but it was slowly passing from use. My mother used the Dutch oven only in the hot summer months or on special occasions like a threshing bee when extra food was needed.

Brick Dutch Oven Was 3½ Feet Wide

Since a Dutch oven is only a memory to a very few old people today, a description of one may not be out of place. The one with which I was most familiar was made of brick or at least was brick-lined on the inside and possibly reinforced outside with stone masonry.

The oven proper, with arched or oval-shaped top was possibly five feet long, 3½ feet wide, eight inches high at the sides and 15 inches high in the middle. It had a smooth, flat bottom about four feet above ground level. It had an opening in the front about 12 by 15 inches connected to a chimney at the rear.

The method of heating was to fill it with very finely split pieces of very dry cedar wood. When this was burned down to very fine coals and ash (during which time the walls became very hot) the remaining fire would be scraped through a small opening in the bottom of the oven. The pans of bread and pies were placed in the oven, the opening in front tightly closed and the heated walls would hold the heat to complete the baking process.

I recall seeing mother with her bare arms stretched inside, testing the oven for the proper temperature before putting in the things to be baked and closing the opening. It probably required a lot of close watching to obtain the best results.

This old Dutch oven was a far cry from the electric ovens of today, with controlled heat and automatic switches, but unless I have acquired a prejudiced opinion of the wonderful home made bread and pies served in those bygone days, the up-to-the-minute gadgets now in use have not made up for the phenomenal skill then acquired to produce the finished articles.

After the Dutch oven had been used to bake a batch of bread or pies, it was allowed to cool somewhat. Shallow wooden trays 3½ feet long and a foot wide were filled with corn or fruit and placed in the warm oven for the initial drying process.

Process Finished By Placing In Sun

The process was finished by placing the trays in the sun for a couple of days, stirring occasionally. When all the moisture was dried out, the fruit was packed in light open weave bags and stored in a special chest kept in a dry part of the house.

As I explained previously, glass jars and tin cans had not come into common use on the farm when I was young, therefore drying was the best method of preserving fruit and vegetables.

Apples were most commonly used but we dried cherries, elderberries and raspberries.

To make dried corn, mother cooked it on the cob as would be done for table use. After cooling, she would cut the kernels from the cob with a sharp knife.

The chest in which the dried fruit was kept was placed in a large airy upstairs closet at our place. It was the favorite pastime of my young folks to raid this chest.

As I recall, we had a decided preference for chokecherries and elderberries. However, we had a problem to contend with in disposing of the cherry pits. We found a happy solution by dropping them into a knot-hole in the floor of my bedroom.

I expect they will still be there after 70 odd years—unless mice have found them. Speaking of mice reminds me of the winter I had a great deal of amusement catching mice in a trap which they made for themselves.

The granary was situated above the open shed at the rear of the barn. I had noticed the hens congregating at a certain spot beside the wall to scratch for food. I found that mice had gnawed a small hole in the ceiling above which they nibbled the grain and it

was falling through. More startling was the discovery that the mice in their feasting frequently got right over the hole and their tails would stick out.

By standing on a ladder when the mice were feeding I would wait till a tail came through the hole, catch it firmly in my thumb and forefinger and pull the mouse through its self-made trap. The opening was so small that the poor little mouse would be dead on arrival.

Tin In Great Demand In Early Farm Days

Strange as it may seem, this was one kind of trap the mice never learned to avoid. I caught dozens of them. The fun didn't last too long, for when father emptied the bin he covered the hole with tin.

Tin was in great demand on the farms of the early days. There was no enamelled ware or aluminum dishes. Every spring the women set aside a special day for scouring the tinware to keep the dishes looking respectable.

On a nice morning they would heat water in the big iron kettle in the outdoor fireplace and wash the milk pails, dishes, pans, cups, pie plates, strainers, dippers and washboiler with a mild lye solution.

After washing in this solution each utensil was taken to a nearby bench or table and scoured and rubbed with a mixture of soft soap and fine sand.

At the end of the day the tinware shone with such lustre you couldn't tell it from new.

They say the mule's well-known stubbornness is a reason it is ranked ahead of the horse in intelligence. The horse may work itself to death but a mule will take just so much and then nothing short of dynamite can make him move.

GORMLEY

Mr. Frank Harvey attended the U.M.S. Sunday School Convention at Stratford on Monday. Mrs. M. Cole of Toronto spent a few days with Mrs. Beulah Jones.

Mr. Roy Bovair is in Western Hospital undergoing plastic surgery necessitated by the burns he suffered in an accident last June.

Mr. Jos. Jones and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Jones and Peggy of Aurora spent the holiday weekend with Mr. and Mrs. Ken Jones and family of Clinton.

Mrs. Norman Johnston and boys went to Montreal last week to meet her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Suley, who have just returned from a visit to England.

Rev. and Mrs. George Sheffer of Stayner had Sunday dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Roy Brillinger.

Miss Luella Winger who is attending the Rockway Mennonite School in Kitchener spent the weekend with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Winger.

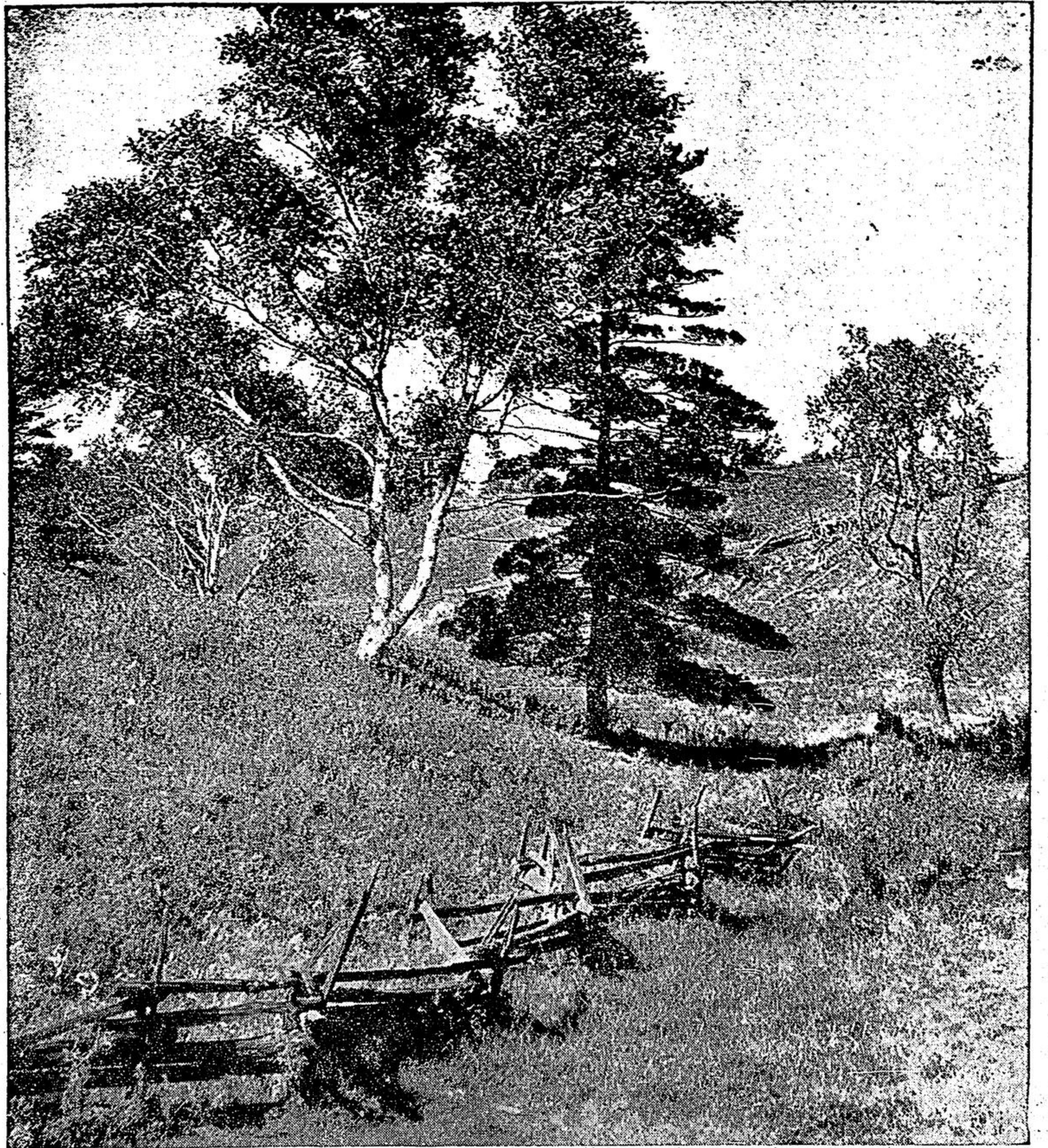
Misses Freda Saunders and June Barnesdale of Oak Ridges spent the weekend at the Henderson home.

A bus load of children from Heise Hill Church, accompanied by their Sunday School teachers attended the Children's Rally of the Billy Graham Crusade on Saturday morning at the Coliseum, Toronto.

Mrs. Helen Henry spent the holiday weekend with friends in Huntsville.

Mr. and Mrs. Dick Roberts and sons of Cornwall spent Thanksgiving with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Estyn Roberts.

We extend sympathy to Mrs. Estyn Roberts in the sudden death of her sister, Mrs. Edward McLaren of Brantford, who was buried on Thanksgiving day.



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PINE ORCHARD

Mr. and Mrs. R. Allen spent a few days in Windsor with their son and family.

Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Hope and family were Peterborough visitors Sunday with Mrs. Hope's sister and family.

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Baker and family moved to Vivian on Monday. We wish them the best in their new home.

Miss Jean Johnston visited her brother Walter a few days. Mr. and Mrs. Chapman, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Eveleigh and sons were at the Johnston home Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Rae McClure, Myrna and Danny were Sunday guests with Miss White of Toronto.

We are sorry to report the wee daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Lundy is in Sick Children's Hospital seriously ill.

French REVOLUTION

When you get a French chef to touch mass-produced, quick-frozen foods with a ten-foot spoon—that's a kitchen revolution. Yet some fifty quick-frozen Gallic delicacies are now being marketed by a French company of cooks.

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Steep Fines for Slick Gents Operating at Fair Grounds

Last week, in Newmarket police court, it was sentence day for three men accused as "carnival slickers" mulcting the gullible at a game of chance, in a concession at Sutton Fair. Magistrate Hollinrake found two of the accused guilty and imposed extremely heavy sentences. The third man walked out of court free, because His Worship felt the evidence against him was insufficient. Evidence was heard one week ago.

William Forde, Toronto, was sentenced to a fine of \$500 or two months in jail, plus 10 days in jail; Charles Steiner was sentenced to \$500 fine or two months in jail, plus 30 days in jail. The case against William Bloom, the magistrate said, failed to link Bloom to the gambling or show conclusively that he was one of the operators of the game. A recommendation for deportation against Steiner was also made. All the equipment and cash box money seized by the police was ordered confiscated.

Magistrate Hollinrake summed up the case in a written verdict. He took care to show that the game—throwing bottle caps into a paper cup—constituted a pure chance and not any combination of chance and skill. He also said that the inducement was cash and not merchandise, which excuses many gambling and lottery efforts at agricultural fairs and service club carnivals.

Hope for Wider Bridge

Travellers on Provincial highway 48 (the former 8th concession) north of Mount Albert have been heartened that something will immediately be done to widen the "one-lane" bridge crossing the Black River, two miles south of Brown Hill.

For three days early in October, parties of surveyors have been taking measurements on both sides of the bridge approach.

The bridge is in perfect shape, though too narrow for today's traffic. It was built in 1934 as an East Gwillimbury township road project, under supervision of Lindsay J. Farr, at that time the road superintendent of East Gwillimbury.

Crown Attorney Sanders Takes Over At Newmarket

In Newmarket police court last week, County Crown Attorney Harold Sanders took over the duties of presenting the cases and debating the law on occasion with the Bench. Mr. Sanders is replacing Assistant Crown Attorney Arleigh Armstrong, who is holidaying this month.

While Mr. Sanders' work for years past has been at County Court, at Adelaide Street, Toronto, he is actually no stranger to this district.

Poor Turnout See Plowing

International plowing match officials said last week they lost money on this year's match.

Attendance figures showed only 62,000 of the expected 200,000 spectators turned up this year to make it one of the poorest in the 67-year history of competitive plowing in the province.

Only 10,000 attended yesterday, the final day of the four-day competition.

Many of the eating establishments started to fold up at noon. Most of them hadn't made much profit, operators said.

Match officials blamed it on lack of local interest. We would say the poor location was a big contributor.

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