

Vintage Whine



Last Night Of The Poms*

By Kate Gilderdale
Stouffville Free Press

They came, they partied and then – alas – they departed.

Our British family and friends braved what is on track to become the coldest February on record to celebrate our daughter's wedding. As Mr. Wallethead observed to those fearless pilgrims during his speech, "I've heard destination weddings are all the rage. But Toronto? In February?"

As life goes spinning on around us, we often fail to take time to appreciate what we have. The wedding concentrated my mind wonderfully on how very lucky we are to have such a loving family, including many who are not blood relatives, but who we have collected along the way since our early days as immigrants in Toronto in the mid-70s.

It was also a reminder of how our corner of Canada embraces people from across the world, with vastly different beliefs, backgrounds and interests, and makes them part of the wonderful, motley crew that constitutes our country. From Turkey, Colombia and Pakistan to Serbia and Iran, our guests came from many different countries to settle in one of the most accepting places on the planet.

If you were born here and have never been to a citizenship ceremony, I urge you to tag along when someone you know becomes a Canadian. Mr. Wallethead and I have attended four – one being our own – and we never cease to be amazed at how moving they are. As a result, we have become citizenship ceremony groupies.

As we stood under the candlelit chuppah at our daughter's wedding, our feelings were beautifully summed up by the officiant when he said, in reference to the joining of two cultures, "This is a wedding made in Toronto."

I'd like to claim the credit for a flawless event, but that honour goes to our daughter, her husband and his parents. It started with the perfect venue for our combined families – the Toronto Reference Library. Both bride and groom grew up surrounded by books and both have always been avid readers.

At the end of the evening, guests were invited to take home one of the many tomes donated by members of the wedding party, along with a bookmark commemorating an unforgettable day.

Apart from contributing a lot of books myself, I also agreed to supply some home baked goodies for the dessert table. My daughter asked what I would be making. "Cranberry cake dessert bars," I said, with misplaced confidence.

The week before the wedding I was elbow deep in flour, eggs, butter, sugar and cranberries, creating my unique

masterpieces. The first batch were, to put it mildly, a little crisp; my friend suggested I rebrand them as blackened Cajun cranberry cakes.

Undaunted (read panic-stricken), I chucked them out and started again. The next lot came out looking surprisingly like the picture in the recipe until I started cutting them into 'squares', whereupon they assumed an uncanny resemblance to three-dimensional Rorschach inkblots. It was time to re-rebrand them as cranberry blobs. The good news is, they tasted a lot better than they looked.

The party may be over, but the warm glow of happiness lives on. We poured the Brits into cabs and cars and delivered them to Pearson.



"I've heard destination weddings are all the rage. But Toronto? In February?"

Several days on and we're still scarfing our way through cranberry blobs, date and walnut squares, chocolate chip cookies and tiny perfect lemon shortbreads.

February. From the longest shortest month to the most wonderful time of the year.

*Ancient Oz slang for Brits

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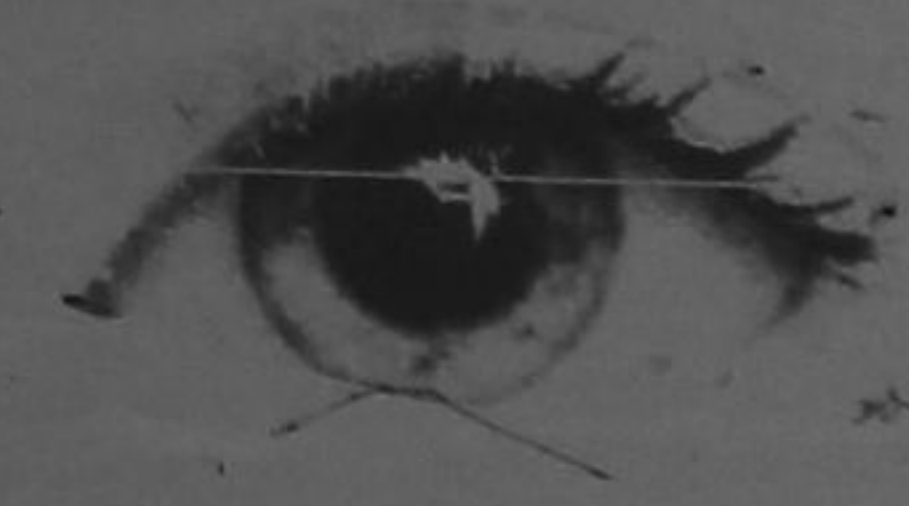
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