

Life as a Cook (Part 1 of 2)

Collector: Ann O'Brien

Contributor: Ethel Flynn

Ann O'Brien:

Today is September 28th, I'm at the home of Ethel Flynn MacDonald and ah... Ethel is gonna share a story with me about being... cooking, learning to cook with...from her mom, as a little girl and as she grew up.

Okay Ethel. Go right ahead.

Ethel Flynn:

Okay Ann, how many lies do you want me to tell ya? (laughs)

Ann O'Brien:

You better all the truth.

Ethel Flynn and Ann O'Brien:

(laughs)

Ethel Flynn:

Well, I was nine year old Ann when I started, cooking. My first batch of bread, was nine. And from that, I think I was in the bread pan.

Ann O'Brien:

How did you come to learn to mix bread at such an early age?

Ethel Flynn:

My mom was helping my dad put the fish away and it was really late one night when she got home from the stage head, so I decided I was going to make bread before she got home. And that's how I started. With the help of Grandfather Flynn, I think, he (laughs) he watched over me.

Ann O'Brien:

Hmm.

Ethel Flynn:

So that's how I started.

Ann O'Brien:

And then you mixed bread at night.

Ethel Flynn:

At night it was made and that batch of bread turned out good and since then I've been ...got interested in cooking and mom was...showed me a lot of things and we made cakes together so what else are we going to put in there? And my grandmother was a big help with me, I use to watch her doing things.

Ann O'Brien:

You spent time down at your grandmothers..

Ethel Flynn:

Yes, in Fox Cove.

Ann O'Brien:

Fox Cove.

Ethel Flynn:

I helped her make the butter and make cakes for grandfather.

Ann O'Brien:

They had cows.

Ethel Flynn:

Hmm. We had fresh milk and fresh butter to make ...make the cakes which was... turned out really good.

Ann O'Brien:

So they had hens too?

Ethel Flynn:

Yeah.

Ann O'Brien:

So you had a lot to work with?

Ethel Flynn:

I had a lot to work with. And like I said, I was only young when mom took me out of school ...out of school 'cause she was sick and I ..I don't know how many boo – boo's I made but I had to cook for a family of seven or eight of us.

Ann O'Brien:

Yeah.

Ethel Flynn:

You had to make the pies and the tea buns and the molasses buns and the cakes and jam.

Ann O'Brien:

Now meals, Ethel ... would you cook dinner and supper?

Ethel Flynn:

Usually we had dinner and supper cooked. Dinner was the big meal and supper was a smaller meal. You didn't cook as much maybe it was macaroni and tomatoes which we.... and like I told you we had ah....the tomatoes and the bread and pork and onions fried up together.

Ann O'Brien:

Do you remember what you called it?

Ethel Flynn:

Squeaky we use to call it. (laughs)

Ann O'Brien:

Some people called it Tomato Scrounge.

Ethel Flynn:

Yeah.

Ann O'Brien:

I heard that.

Ethel Flynn:

Yeah. And there was another name on it, some people use to call it (inaudible). And ah... like I said I was a early age and then, I was married at a real young age and had a family of children, so. You had to learn how to cook for them too. Provide for them.

Ann O'Brien:

Yeah, your cooking skills come in close, for sure.

Ethel Flynn:

Then I went to work in a restaurant. I was only in my early thirties, went as a waitress, but hated it. And they put me in the kitchen and I loved it so it's been thirty five years of cooking in restaurants and hotels.

Ann O'Brien:

Hmmm. So did they have like a menu for you to follow to cook or did you...

Ethel Flynn:

No.

Ann OBrien:

...did what you thought?

Ethel Flynn:

I did what I thought was...when I went to work at ah Goose Restaurant, whatever daily specials I came up with. That was the daily specials.

Ann O'Brien:

Hmm.

Ethel Flynn:

If it happen to be a fish special or a meat special, I had to cook it. And then I went at Sinbad Hotel and cooked there for three years.

Ann O'Brien:

Where is this at?

Ethel Flynn:

In Gander.

Ann O'Brien:

Gander.

Ethel Flynn:

Then I moved to Ontario and I worked for the...in the Ramada Inn in Ontario for two and a half years.

Ann O'Brien:

Well, you dearly love cooking, no doubt.

Ethel Flynn:

Yeah. So my enjoyment was cooking, I really I like trying new things and

Ann O'Brien:

Yeah.

Ethel Flynn:

You have a fair idea, when you like cooking what goes together.

Ann O'Brien:

Now when you was growing up Ethel ah... a typical week menu, would be what.

Ethel Flynn:

At our home?

Ann O'Brien:

Yes.

Ethel Flynn:

Typical menu would be fish. You had to do something with cod fish and then there was salmon, then there was herring, then you had your jigs dinner and your stews and your soups.

Ann O'Brien:

Now Sundays was was it ah....

Ethel Flynn:

It was a wild meats, your caribou, your turrs, and ducks.

Ann O'Brien:

Monday you would have?

Ethel Flynn:

Monday it would be left overs. Supper time it would be some sort of fish, it could be stewed, it could be fried or it could be baked, stuffed baked cod.

Then Tuesdays it would be stew or soup. And on Wednesday, we'd have.... it'd be beans or baked beans or stewed beans.

Thursdays it was jigs dinner. The big meal was at dinner time, well lunch time we call it now but then it was dinner time and supper we had, you'd still have something... something cooked. It could have been, like you said, fish again. (laughs)

And Fridays it was a fish day. Saturday at moms house it was baked beans for supper, and pea soup for dinner. A windy day.

Ann O'Brien:

For most people it was just pea soup and well supper time you would have left over soup but your mother always...,,,

Ethel Flynn:

Mom always had pea soup and baked beans. And Sunday then it was your cooked dinner with your turrs or your wild meat. Now we had cattle, in the winter time we had lots of fresh beef, because dad always had a head of cattle he killed.

Ann O'Brien:

Did you have hens too?

Ethel Flynn:

Yeah. We had hens, we had pig....

Ann O'Brien:

Hmm. Well that was your pork.

Ethel Flynn:

That was our pork for the winter.

Ann O'Brien:

Now if you had like caribou left over, you know, when the freezing...when you couldn't freeze it anymore, what would your mom do?

Ethel Flynn:

Mom bottled some up and then the...all the leg bones and the head part, they'd skin the head and they'd make, what we called, pothead meat.

(Phone rings – recorder turned off)