



# Wooden Spoons

**Mission Statement:** Mary Jane's Cooking School, Inc. provides education in nutritional home cooking and homemaking in harmony with individual, community and cultural traditions, with respect and care for the environment.  
 Mary Jane's Cooking School is a Registered Charity in the Province of Manitoba

## Chief Seattle, 1855

*The white man must treat the beasts of the land as his brothers. For what is man without the beasts? If the beasts were gone, men would die from great loneliness of spirit, for whatever happens to the beasts also happens to man. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons of the Earth.*

Chief Seattle, Duwamish Tribe, 1855

## The Family Farm and Thanksgiving: An Autumn Reflection

*"Take rest. A field that has rested gives a beautiful crop. " —Ovid*

It's October, and across the country autumn has arrived, accompanied by the intermittent rain showers dotted with falling leaves of many hues. The season of reflection, of remembering, of 'coming home' in the deepest sense, has brought me to my desk to deal with the leftovers of summer. Like all leftovers, they are often the best bits, the tastiest of treats because spiced and marinated in the richness of memory they bring back experiences that deserve to be savored, treasured, and honoured in the consuming, like the last ginger cookie in a great homemade batch, or the last piece of pumpkin pie from a family feast. And this brings me to think, of course, of Thanksgiving.

Giving thanks for the season, for the changes of season, and for all that life provides is a profoundly natural and spiritual practice. Every culture, every nation has recognized in some way the connection between the gifts and seasons of the earth and the seasons of human life. The elders also teach that coming to acknowledge our relatedness to all that is allows us to move into the next season of our life with a peaceful certainty greater than at any earlier point in our life journey. As we mature, they say, we come to know that we belong to the Great Mystery—some call it God, others

the Great Spirit-- that encompasses all Creation. And we know, or we intuit rather, that whatever changes we experience, the cycle of seasons will continue and that circle of Life will indeed not be broken between us and the extended family of creation that aboriginal cultures call "All My Relations."

For me, today, the reality of All My Relations comes together with the idea of leftovers from great family feasts, like Thanksgiving, to bring memories of my Grandma and Grandpa, Laura and Jim Murray, both long passed away, and of my Aunt Vivianne Sewell, in her cozy house in the town of LaFleche, Saskatchewan, twelve miles from the family farm.

The leftovers that lie in the middle of my desk are all about those memories, offering treats to read, rather than to eat; two sheets of paper and several photographs that tell the story of summer celebrations now moving into family lore. One is a note from Aunt Vivianne, thanking me for attending her birthday gathering, her 80<sup>th</sup>, that brought together all of her children, and grandchildren, nieces and nephews, and their partners, over four generations. Like the best family reunions, this party celebrated great food and good times, attested to in photographs and creating everlasting

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## Programs at Mary Jane's Cooking School

### **M**aking Food, Making Friends

funded by the United Way was a two-year program offered one day per week bringing together women from Aboriginal and refugee backgrounds to socialize, share and make friends while learning about nutrition and healthful cooking for themselves and their families. An integral component of the classes was building cross-cultural awareness and understanding to promote community building and harmony. A holistic approach was taken with emphasis on environmental responsibility in the home and in our food choices.

The 6<sup>th</sup> and final 12 week session of Making Food Making Friends ended with a Completion Ceremony in which participants and their invited guests came to celebrate with shared food and friendship.

Each group that participated had their own unique characteristics. No two groups were ever the same and yet some of the participants continued from one group to the other as a thread that unified the entire program.

The participants from refugee backgrounds were all learning English and spoke English with difficulty. The classes provided them with an opportunity to acquire English language skills while cooking together informally or even through reading recipes out loud.

Some of the immigrant women were professional women who lost everything due to war and had to start over again without getting any recognition for their training or credentials. The Aboriginal women and the refugee women were on an equal footing in that both groups tended to have difficulties with language and reading. There was a bonding that developed and a better understanding about each other's cultures. The strengths of each group were shared with each other.

Making Foods, Making Friends empowered the women to be better able to make healthful food choices and to provide nutritious meals for their families on a limited budget. The program was very nurturing to the women who had been traumatized by war or affected by colonialism. The program served to build friendship and understanding amongst the cultures and particularly toward Aboriginal people who often share the same limited resources in the same communities with refugee newcomers to Canada. When one of our African participants had a baby after completing the program everyone knew about it, illustrating that they were keeping in touch after the program had ended. The program served to strengthen community, decrease isolation and create harmony in the neighbourhood.

Our final session had the blessing of two women who came to support the participants: Sister Anne Adoukpe from Bene and Sister Idalena Ferreira joined the classes and assisted with the activities and discussion. They offered encouragement and insight. Sister Idalena showed the women how to make soy milk and soy grits, both of which are nutritious and economical. Board member Eveline Caners came regularly to prepare the lunches for the women. This was greatly appreciated.

It was with sadness that we ended our final program. The women expressed their profound appreciation for the program and the need for more programs. Although we explained this was our last program, several guests who came to celebrate with the participants asked to be enrolled in the next session.

**C**ooking Like Kokum, (*Cooking Like Grandmother did*) funded by the

Manitoba Assembly of Chiefs, offers nutrition information and cooking classes for the participants of the Eagles' Nest Program at Burton Cummings Community Centre. This program was offered for the second time, starting in September. The participants are youth who have dropped out of school and are in transition.

The youth are vulnerable and many have come in conflict with the law. Some are parents themselves. The Eagles Nest program aims to build capacity and provide an opportunity for Aboriginal Youth to work toward goals using a holistic approach. Their programs focus on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development.

Cooking Like Kokum focuses on developing life skills and increasing knowledge of food and nutrition and its importance to health. The program aims to encourage participants to enhance their life skill and take care of their health through nutritious food. Several participants are in this program a second time. I am able to notice positive changes taking place in the participants as they are offered support, provided with a supportive environment and given traditional spiritual teachings. Each participant is moving forward in his or her own way and pace.

### **C**ooking for Fitness and Health

this program is being offered off site at the Ellice Avenue location of New Directions for young women participants in the Resources for Adolescent Parents (RAP) Program. The program focuses on developing lifeskills and increasing knowledge of food and nutrition and its importance to health. The young women attending this program are encouraged to set goals for themselves and

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Visit MJCS webpage at: [www.maryjanescookingschool.org](http://www.maryjanescookingschool.org)

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improve their lives through a variety of programs. Nutrition information and discussion is offered at the beginning of each class. The girls then prepare a variety of foods. One thing that motivates the girls to eat healthfully is their interest in the well-being of their infants. Infant nutrition is included in the program.

**N**dinawe: a series of professional development classes are being offered for the staff of Ndinawe, an organization that provides safe houses and drop in centres for troubled youth. The aim of the program is to provide the women who are in charge of meal preparation with nutritional knowledge, an opportunity to try out new recipes as well as assist them in increasing the nutritional value of the meals they prepare for the youth.

The women, all experienced cooks are very motivated and resourceful and have the best interests of the youth at heart. Theirs is a difficult task because many of the young people in the group homes or centres are only interested in the fast devitalized foods that they grew up on and have no interest in healthy eating. The women persevere in being role models for the youth, hoping and believing that they will internalize the positive values being taught.

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though inevitably variable memories according to the rememberer, memories that become tastier and more treasured as they marinate in time.

The other paper on my desk, also from Aunt Vivianne, is a document that resembles the certificates awarded to participants in Mary Jane's Cooking School cooking classes. This is a photocopy of the Century Family Farm Award given by the Saskatchewan Information Services Corporation, to family farms achieving 100 years or more of continuous farming operation in that province. It reminds us all that one hundred years ago, back in 1909 when Grandpa was 16 years old, he left his parents' farm in Fort Qu'Appelle, and homesteaded the land that later became our family farm and is still farmed by my cousin Jack.

As I sit here and look at these testimonies to our history I wonder why I haven't already taken the time to write and thank my aunt for sending them to me. After all, she sent them in August and it's now mid-October. I like to write letters, so why haven't I written?

Perhaps the reason is that I'm lazy; not wanting to go to the effort to put my thoughts on paper. After all, writing as every writer will tell you is very hard work, and this is the fall, the season that Ovid tells us to take rest, take a break from all

that labour, and let our field begin to lay fallow for a while.

But stop working? I'm certain that in all their years on the farm Grandpa and Grandma never did that. And every farmer living will say the same thing, whatever the season. There is always work to be done. Work inside and work outside. And sometimes it seems the inside work is the most laborious. Ask any farm wife.

So this is not the time for leaving anything undone. Our interior work demands attention. On the farm, in the office, in the city and the town and everywhere in the kitchen. The work goes on.

So why haven't I written my thanks before this? I prefer to believe that the reason for my hesitation is that these are among the most important words I can express. They require a time of reflection, of mediation, and of remembering all that I value and all that I would honour with my words. And now, as autumn arrives, the time has come.

It is time to say how I'm proud of being a part of a family that gathers to celebrate the birthday of our elders. That brings children and spouses together at the table and in the fields to honour traditions spun by generations of forebears. Women and men who worked hard, and brought up their children with care and with love. Who harvested crops and tended their flocks, with hens that were allowed to wander around in the farmyard before com-

ing in to lay their eggs in straw-filled beds in the henhouse. People who never thought to confine their animals in inhumane contraptions as large factory farms do now, nor disregarded the needs of their neighbours.

So I'm offering my thanks at last to my Aunt Vivianne for sending me the photocopied certificate of the "Century Family Award to the Sewell Family Farm, established by James A. Murray. This award recognizes 100 years or more of continuous farming operation in Saskatchewan." The certificate concludes by noting that "the family farm represents the traditions and heritage that have shaped our province."

As I remember my own family I know that this award belongs to every family farm that struggles to honour the Earth and the soil and the gifts of Nature. May they continue forever throughout the cycle of the seasons, across our provinces, our nation and our world. And may I never lose the memory of Grandma in her kitchen, canning rhubarb, or of Grandpa in his 94<sup>th</sup> year as he kneeled on the ground to draw his homegrown potatoes from the Earth. No longer merely on the land but of it, he knew where he came from, he honoured the seasons and their gifts, and he was glad. All My Relations.

**Laura L. Steiman**, Past President

# Tomatoes - Most Popular Garden Fare

The tomatoes that were taken in from the garden before the frost continue to ripen. Preserving them for the winter months ahead is a good idea. Tomatoes, the most popular garden vegetable, are high in a carotenoid called lycopene that seems to be of great value in offering many health benefits. Fortunately this nutrient is not destroyed in the canning process.

Canning is the preferred method of preserving them as their flavour is retained and they are ready to use. The recommended procedure for canning tomatoes requires processing in a 'canner', which is a large enamelled pot that holds 7 jars that are immersed in a water bath. The water and jars [tomatoes] are brought to a boil and allowed to boil for a specified time. A home canning guide will provide all of the information necessary to achieve success. Following the proper steps is important in avoiding any risks of spoilage.

I have had success in canning tomatoes by an "open kettle" method without any spoilage. This method is simpler but requires being very diligent in following the steps to be sure that no spoilage occurs. Every piece of equipment must be sterilized and the tomatoes must be boiling be-

fore they are put into jars and sealed.

The steps to take are as follows: First, prepare the jars. Put aside the number you'll need along with new snap lids and their rings.

Wash jars and lids in hot soapy water and rinse well.

Set your oven at 250 degrees.



Place clean jars in oven and leave for at least 20 minutes to sterilize them.

Place snap lids in a pot of boiling water for 10 minutes before you're ready to pour the cooked tomatoes into the jars.

Prepare tomatoes while jars are heating. Remove the skins by dipping them in boiling water for a few seconds then putting into cold water to cool. Cut them in quarters and place them in a large pot. When finished add a little water, cover pot and bring to a boil over medium heat. Stir the

tomatoes gently occasionally to prevent them from sticking to the bottom. Juices will be released while cooking. NB Do not over cook!

When tomatoes are boiling and jars and lids are hot and sterilized, remove one jar at a time from oven using mitts or tongs, and place on a plate for catching drips. Place funnel on jar [if using a metal one, sterilize first] and pour simmering hot tomatoes into jar using sterilized ladle.

Add a teaspoon of salt to each quart, wipe rim of jar with a clean wet cloth then place snap lid [that has been boiling for 10 minutes or more] on jar then tighten ring over it firmly. You will hear a snap from each lid as the jars cool. Retighten the ring after you hear the snap sound.

**Tip:** Some varieties of tomato have a mild flavour so to intensify the flavour I sometimes dilute some tomato paste [about 1 tsp per quart of tomatoes] in some of the clear juices and add back to the tomatoes in the pot. Allow to return to a boil before pouring into jars.

Enjoy these gifts from Nature all winter long!

Eveline Caners  
Board member, MJCS

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## Canning and Botulism - A Broad Perspective

Here is the scenario: A mother opens a jar of home canned tomatoes that has a little mold on the surface. She removes the mold and tastes it to check whether it is good. It tastes all right and so she uses the tomatoes to make a spaghetti sauce

for her meatballs and spaghetti dinner. Her family enjoys the spaghetti dinner but the mother comes down with botulism and near death is rushed to the hospital. The mother gets sick but her family does not. Why? This article should provide

the answer to the question.

Canning allows us to preserve the harvest in a sealed container in which microorganisms have been destroyed and oxygen and microorganisms are kept from entering by

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an airtight seal. We can thank Nicolas Appert who around 1810 discovered this method of preserving food, which remains with us today.

The real challenge in canning is food safety and the main concern is preventing the conditions under which the bacterium **clostridium botulinum** can proliferate. The bacterium is harmless but the **toxin** it makes is one of the most lethal known. This toxin causes the illness **botulism**, which is often fatal because it shuts down the neurotransmitters that control breathing and virtually turns off our breathing. Understanding the conditions under which the bacteria thrive is necessary to preventing these conditions. The bacteria require **low acid** and **anaerobic** (no oxygen) conditions in order to grow. The bacteria are killed by heat but their **spores** (or eggs) can survive heat. Should conditions within a canned product be just right these spores could germinate and produce their toxins. These conditions of **no oxygen** and **low acid** rarely occur together in canned foods and that is why botulism is rare but given the right circumstances it can happen. If canned tomatoes do not have an airtight seal, microorganisms can enter and molds may start to grow. The mold may lower the acidity enough to allow for the germination of botulinum spores only if the jar is anaerobic. That is not likely but it is possible. Whenever my mother found a jar of tomatoes with mold on the surface she would skim off the mold, taste the tomatoes and use them if there was no moldy taste. She never got botulism and she canned all the tomatoes that were grown, some 60 to 100 quarts in a

year for her family. Of those tomatoes, there would be the odd jar that grew mold. Once the mold was removed of course we ate these tomatoes, which were flavourful just eaten cold. We did not get botulism but it was a possibility though unlikely. Had the toxin been present I would not be writing this article but had my mother boiled the tomatoes before serving them the toxin would have been destroyed. Heat will inactivate the toxin made by the botulinum bacteria.

The issue of acidity is crucial to safe canning. Only high acid foods should be canned using a hot water



bath. Low acid foods require the use of a **pressure cooker**, which reaches a temperature higher than boiling and will effectively kill off any spores, which could hatch if conditions favored them. Since some varieties of tomatoes today have low acidity it is necessary as a precaution to add 1 teaspoon of acid such as lemon juice or citric acid powder to each quart being processed. I also use 1 teaspoon of salt for each quart for flavour and as a preservative.

In former days when people lived off the land, and there was no refrigeration or deep freezers, people relied on salting foods, drying foods and canning everything including the low acid vegetables such as beans and peas. They did not neces-

sarily use a pressure cooker at least not in my grandmother's day. They survived and did not succumb to the much-dreaded botulism. They did not have the electricity or the sanitation we enjoy. They did not have running water either but had to carry water from a well. We would do well to keep all these things in perspective as we consider our tendency to over react to the dangers of canning. Our present day home economists would be aghast at the fact that low acid vegetables were canned in a hot water bath, and that moldy tomatoes were eaten once the mold was removed. That was the reality but it also underlies the fact that conditions ripe for the production of the botulinum toxin are rare. Any danger of botulism is gone if the canned tomatoes which had mold (removed) were boiled for 10 minutes (the recommended guideline).

Safe canning requires the sterilization of jars and their lids, processing in a hot water bath for a required amount of time and having an airtight seal. During the processing oxygen is driven out of the jars. The rims of the jars must be wiped clean of any pieces of tomato that could impair the seal. Running a knife along the inside edges of the jar of tomatoes before processing helps remove air pockets.

Returning to the original question of why the mother got botulism and her family did not should be answered. The mother ingested the toxin formed by the botulinum bacteria but cooking the tomatoes for the spaghetti sauce inactivated the toxin.

**Mary Jane Eason**  
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## Biotech Trickery

A “Machine Model” value system has turned the soil into a machine. When chemical fertilizers and pesticides emerged as the progressive way of farming, proponents (agro chemical corporations) of the Green Revolution confidently claimed that they had the answer to world hunger. But while agri corporations benefited enormously, the so-called Green Revolution failed the majority of farmers, harmed the environment and did not solve the problem of hunger. As lakes are dying and fresh water throughout the world is disappearing, the magnitude of the problems caused by the Green Revolution is something we are just beginning to realize.

As it became more expensive for agribusiness to create new pesticides and as some of its products came off patent, the agbiotech industry began to consolidate in the 1990’s. They found a new source of profit, the patenting of new or changed genes and began to buy up our small seed companies. When the U.S. government in 1994 moved the matter of **Intellectual Property** from the **World Intellectual Property Organization** to the **World Trade Organization** it provided the first global mechanism for patents on living beings and paved the way for the gene revolution and the patenting of crops.

The Green Revolution failed because it is simplistic and ignored the tenets of good farming such as water management, mixed cropping and soil fertility. Similarly the Gene Revolution is simplistic, dangerous and an abysmal failure. The real motive is not about feeding the hungry after all. It is all about the takeover of the food chain, by voracious corporations.

As Andy Rees, author of “**Genetically Modified Food, A Short Guide to the Confused**”

succinctly states “the Genetic Engineering debate boils down to risking health, and environmental and agronomic casualties so that a handful of corporations can profit by patenting the seed of the very foods we eat, and then control the food chain”. Another significant point he makes is that contrary to what proponents say, genetic engineering has no accuracy. The biotech industry would like us to believe that genetic engineering (GE) is a case of removing the desired gene from its source and inserting it into just the right place in the organism’s DNA, but critics say that this is not what happens.

According to scientist Dr. Arpad Pusztai, the genetic engineer is more like a man with a blindfold shooting an arrow. He has no idea where the transgene will land in the



recipient host. According to some scientists the biotech industry is outdated. The fact that one gene can give rise to multiple proteins is not even recognized. What really makes the GE out of date is the idea that genes are isolated units of information that can be moved around and still have the same effect. We now know that genes work as part of a complex interconnected system and that no gene is isolated. If you take one gene out of context you can never predict the outcome. It is flawed simplistic science to claim otherwise.

Consumers do not want GM foods (in many countries, including Canada at least 90% are opposed) and if they are present, consumers around the world want them labeled. The industry claims that GM Technology has been adequately tested and there are no

health risks to GMO’s (genetically modified organisms). The truth is there has barely been any testing. There have been only 10 published studies on the health effects of GM food on animals, but over half were done in collaboration with biotech companies, which found no negative health effects. The other studies were done independently and looked more closely at the effects on the gut lining and found negative results after only 10 – 14 days of feeding. Other studies over and above the 4 studies showing negative effects from GM foods was the Newcastle study, which showed GM DNA transferring to gut bacteria in humans after a single meal. An unpublished Flavr Savr tomato study resulted in lesions and gastritis in rats.

The biotech industry gets around testing by inventing the **Substantial Equivalence (SE)** concept, which claims that chemically speaking the GM, and non-GM version of the plant is so similar as to be the same. If this were true, how then does the biotech industry have a patent on them?

In his book, “**Genetically Modified Food, A Short Guide to the Confused**”, Andy Rees exposed the pseudo science of biotechnology, which flagrantly disobeys both science and safety laws. He exposes the claims made by the biotech industry and identifies the risks and dangers of GMO’s for our health, for farmers and for the environment. Several chapters are devoted to the “Biotech’s Lobby’s Dirty Tricks Department.” He chronicles the setbacks for the biotech industry and shows us a constructive way forward.

**Mary Jane Eason**  
*Program Coordinator and  
Community Nutritionist*

# A lovely nutritious beverage as taught by Sister Idalena

## Soy Beverage

1-cup soybeans  
water

Place 1-cup soybeans in a pot and cover with lots of water. Let stand overnight. Drain and rinse. Put the cup of soybeans in a blender and add 1 liter of water (4 cups). Puree until smooth.

Strain the milk through a clean and sturdy cloth, into a pot, a little bit at a time. Tie the ends of the cloth together and twist to squeeze out all the

milk. Place the **soy grits** into another container. Repeat until all the milk has been extracted.

Heat the milk very gently and just bring to a boil. Let it simmer for 2 or 3 minutes. Remove the foam. When cool, add sweetening to taste and 1 teaspoon of vanilla. Store in a glass container in the refrigerator and use over cereals, as a beverage or as a substitute for milk in cooking and baking.

## Soy Grits

Soy grits are the ground up soybeans without the milk. Store in the refrigerator until ready to use. Use soy grits in cooking and baking. Add to patties, or cook like scrambled eggs, with onions and seasonings. Make up your own recipes for soy grits. They contain protein and vitamins and minerals.

Soy grits can also be dried and used in baking.

### Products for sale – Fundraising for Mary Jane’s Cooking School

## Youth in Philanthropy (YIP)

This program funded by the Winnipeg Foundation gives high school students first hand experience with philanthropy and community development. This year marked the tenth anniversary of the launching of the Youth In Philanthropy program (YIP). This year approximately 350 students from 19 high schools including the Boys and Girls Club formed committees to take part in allocating grants of \$1000.00 and less to local charitable organizations. While a lot of hard work goes into researching and selecting charities as recipients for grants the efforts provide youth with leadership and decision making experience. At the end of the year the committees from all the participating schools come together to report with flair on their year’s work and to announce their choices for grant recipients. St. John’s High School chose Mary Jane’s Cooking School as the recipient of a \$1000.00 grant to be used in providing student support for our programs in the form of

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Nature’s Cargo Sea Salt-coarse grey -	\$5.50/lb
Salt Grinders - tax included	\$19.00
<b>Hemp Seed Nut - non-organic</b>	
1lb canister -	\$11.00
1lb bulk -	\$9.00
10lb bulk	\$85.00
Hemp Seed Oil – non-organic – 350ml -	\$7.50
Hemptein (Hemp Protein Powder) – 1lb canister	\$9.25
<b>Honey – 2009 price Certified Organic, non-pasteurized clover</b>	
1kg	\$12.00
500g jar	\$7.00
1kg tub (non-organic canola)	\$8.00
Kaley’s Soap Nuts – all natural Laundry Soap (70-80 wash loads) 1 pkg.	\$9.00
<b>Beeswax Candles</b>	
8” tapers -	\$5.00/pair
4” pillars	\$8.00—\$10.00
4” star	\$8.00
Beautiful Art Cards – 10 per box	\$15.00

