

THE
**WILD
WEST**
COOKBOOK

— SECOND EDITION —

COWBOY COMFORT FOOD



CINDA CHAVICH

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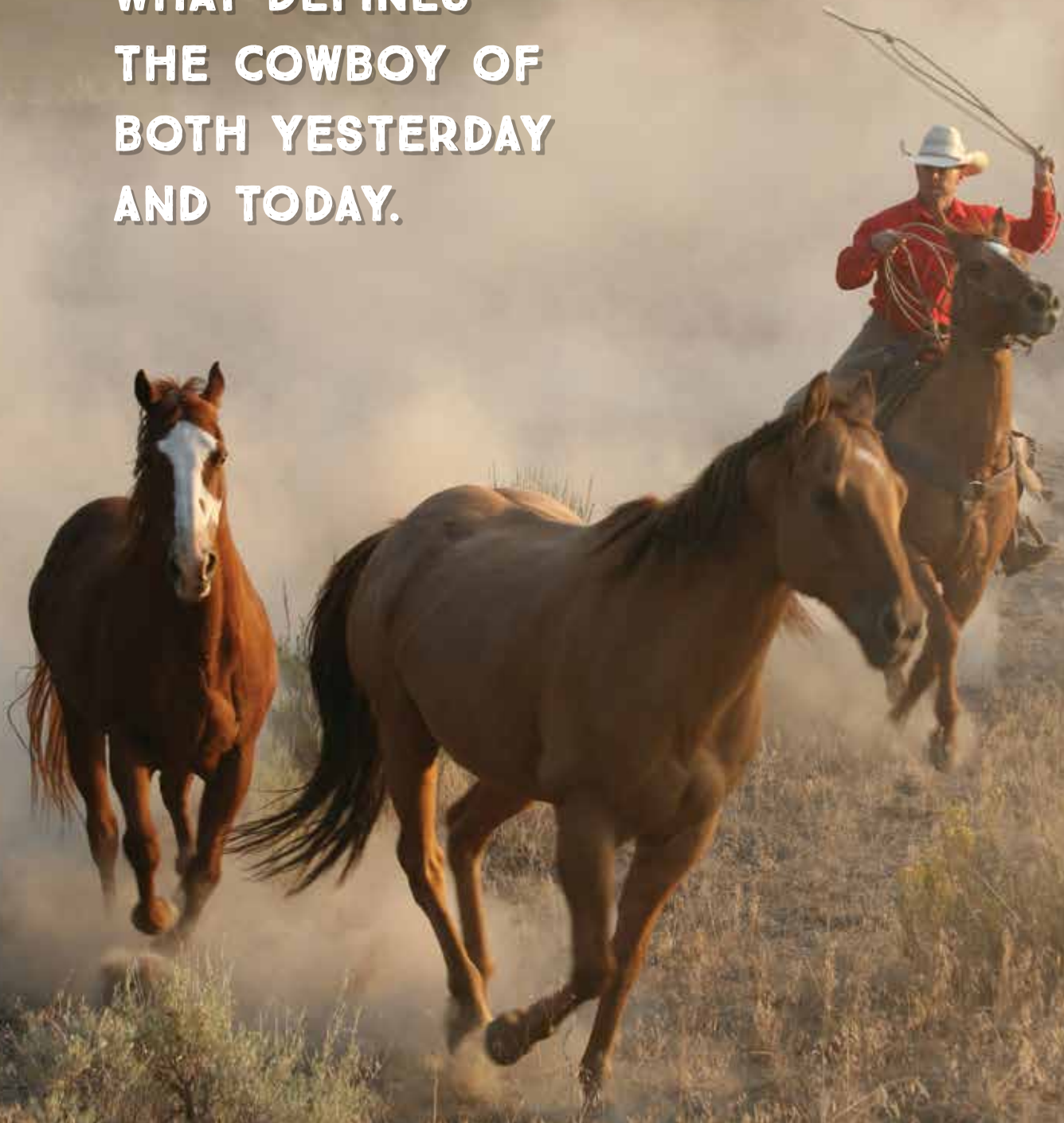
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**TRAVEL IS
WHAT DEFINES
THE COWBOY OF
BOTH YESTERDAY
AND TODAY.**

A decorative graphic at the top of the page features a horseshoe inside a blue and red U-shaped frame. Below this, several silhouettes of cowboys on horseback and a cowboy on a horse herding a cow are arranged in a semi-circle.

COWBOY COOKING AND THE WILD WEST

High plains drifters, itinerant ranch workers or modern rodeo riders — cowboys have always embodied the ideal of the rootless wanderer, just as likely to blow into town on a dusty chinook wind or drift right on out again.

Like the plains buffalo, the rattlesnake or the crafty coyote, the range of the cowboy is wide — a strip of North American desert, prairie and rocky mountain wilderness that stretches from the Gulf states of southern Texas and New Mexico, clear up to the cool Canadian Rockies. Whether you hail from Tulsa, Oklahoma, or Three Hills, Alberta — Albuquerque or Amarillo — the cowboy is a part of local history, folklore and everyday life. Wherever you find cattle ranching, you will find cowboys — even Hawaii has a cowboy culture!



THE FRONTIER LEGEND

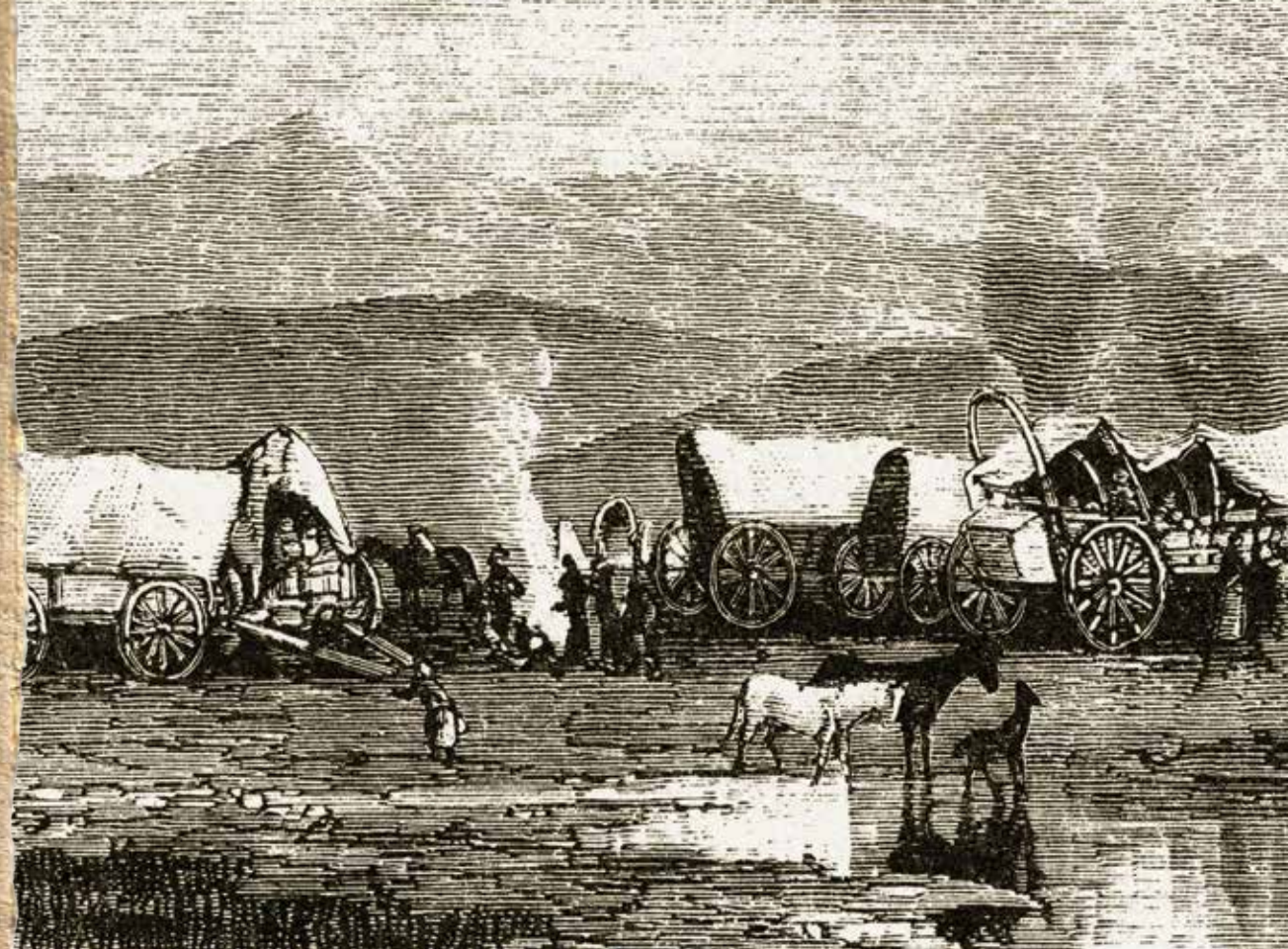
No matter where you call home, there's probably a few cowboy memories in your past, too — whether it was playing stagecoach with cap guns on the back steps, riding real horses on the farm during summer vacations, or simply settling down on Sunday night in front of a fuzzy black-and-white TV for another installment of *Bonanza*. Movies and television brought cowboy legends to the silver screen, whether John Wayne or Clint Eastwood, and modern rodeo competitors keep the culture alive. But the cowboy life remains a romantic one for most, firmly settled in our modern nostalgia for simpler times. Life would be so much easier if you could just ride off into the sunset or, like Gene Autry, break the tension with a soothing ballad.

But for the past 150 years, the reality of cowboy life has been lived by many Westerners in both the United States and Canada — a tableau of natural beauty and big skies, dotted with the realities of drought, isolation, low grain and cattle prices, and other prairie hardships. Modern day cowboys (and cowgirls) are the ranch hands who work with cattle on the open range, or those who compete in rodeos, demonstrating roping, riding and other practical cowboy skills.

Because it was first to be settled, America's Old West was also first to see the cowboy. These early American ranch workers learned their cowpunching skills from Mexican vaqueros, borrowing their practical style of clothing — including wide-brimmed hats and protective leather chaps — and learning the riding and roping skills needed to herd cattle and horses on the open range.

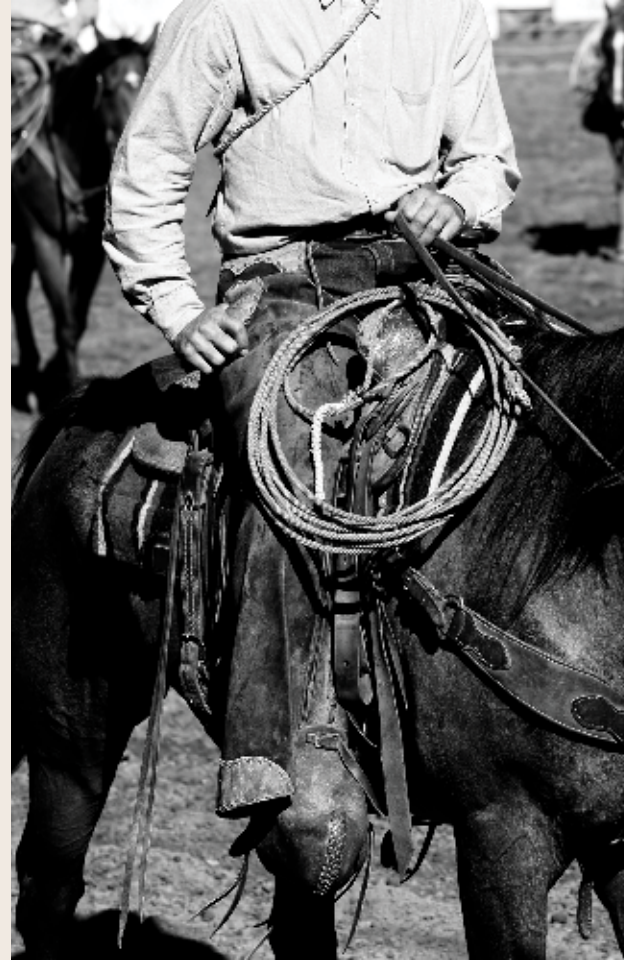
Like the tumbling tumbleweeds, the range of cowboys drifting throughout the West expanded with the cattle business. Trailing cattle from the Texas plains to the railheads of Kansas for sale to slaughterhouses in Chicago was all part of the cowboy's job. Some early Texans drove cattle from the Midwest all the way to New York City. By the early 1880s, they were driving Texas longhorns as far north as Canada, beginning the north-south cowboy migration that is still as common as the western bluebird or Canada goose.

The early cowboy was a part-time worker, usually a seasonal hand who moved from one outfit to the next as work was available. Those who traveled from Texas, Wyoming, Arizona and New Mexico brought their customs and cuisines with them. Even today, it's as common to see a Texas chili on the menu in Calgary (where it's rarely hot enough to grow such a spicy pepper) as it is to eat prairie bison in the Colorado Rockies.





With all of our shared western history, geography and climate, north to south, this is no surprise. Anyone familiar with the regional political debates in both Canada and the United States knows we have more in common with our north-south neighbors across the border than some of our own citizens from eastern or western coastal regions — mainly a function of climate and indigenous flora, fauna and food. It comes as no surprise that many cowboy customs are interchangeable, wherever cowboys work and live throughout the West. Whether it's the myth of the tall, silent gunslinger or the cowboy creed of loyalty above all to his outfit, many things are the same among this breed throughout the West.



ORIGINS OF COWBOY COOKING

Let's look at this reality as it relates to food.

Beef still reigns on the range from Abilene to Alberta, and you'll find the best beef steaks, roasts and ribs in the world on any cowboy menu. Cowboys all eat flapjacks and biscuits, strong coffee, stews and chili — holdovers from the days when chuckwagon cooks fed them these basics on the range. There's still a strong reliance on root vegetables and other storage crops in mid-western cooking, as well as wild foods like game meats and berries, and old-fashioned prairie cooking that came with early waves of settlers from European countries like Britain, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Italy, France and Eastern Europe. After the Civil War, freed southern slaves went west to work on cattle ranches and Chinese immigrants, lured by the Gold Rush and work building the railways across North America, ended up as ranch cooks and small-town café owners.

From the Mexican cowboy traditions came the flavors of searing chilies, corn and chocolate — and today nachos, tamale pies and tortillas are solidly enshrined in western menus.

But back a hundred years ago, when cowboys were roving the range, ranch hands had their dinner-on-the-hoof and they took whatever Cookie (a common handle for a chuckwagon cook) was dishing out.

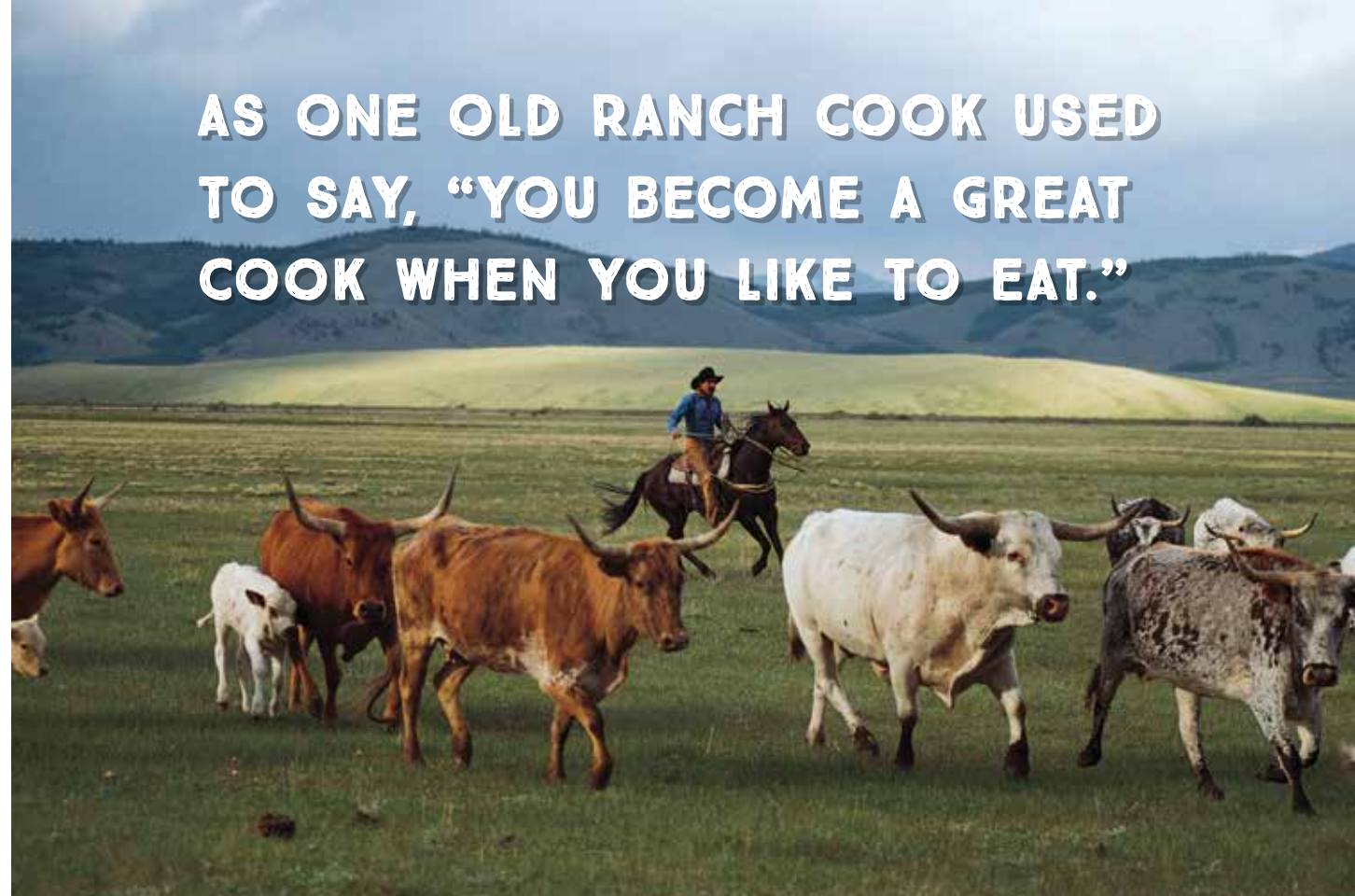
Still, all chuckwagon cooks were not created equal, and the best cowboys drifted to those outfits where the man behind the grub liked to eat and learned to cook. That was the only perk a cowboy could expect from his employer — and good cooks were hard to find. With basic staples like flour, bacon, beans, lard, cornmeal and sugar, they offered some decent chuck from the back of their wagons, based on the meat at hand, mostly wild game and beef. From biscuits and jerky to baked beans, prairie oysters and flapjacks, no man in the saddle ever starved.

Back at the ranch, farm wives and ranch cooks tended gardens, raised chickens and pigs and baked wild fruit or rhubarb pies in big, blackened wood stoves. In the southern climes of Texas and New Mexico, the meals may have been spiced with chilies and served with tortillas, but basic meat-and-potatoes fare was (and is) the mainstay of all cowboy cooks.

Some cooks rode the range with the cowboys during long treks and drives to market. But day-to-day chuckwagons often returned to the ranch after dinner on the range.



AS ONE OLD RANCH COOK USED TO SAY, "YOU BECOME A GREAT COOK WHEN YOU LIKE TO EAT."





The practice of tossing the hot stove in the back of the wagon and racing back to the ranch became an event at rodeos — and now pro rodeo cowboys vie for a \$100,000 prize every year during the chuckwagon races at the Calgary Stampede.

Today things are different on the range. Cowboys carry smart phones and watch the markets via computers in their hefty pick-up trucks. Some still rely on their own “Cookie” to feed them chuckwagon-style during annual round-ups in the foothills, but you’ll see cowboys in the city, too, snacking on spicy Thai chicken wings or eating Italian pasta.



IMMIGRANTS AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN THE OLD WEST

While today's cowboy country cuisine is a melting pot of all world cuisines, the early influences came from the first immigrant settlers.

In Canada, the English and French were the first to venture out West, but they were soon followed by Swiss mountain guides, Italian and Chinese railway workers, Germans and Eastern Europeans, many from Ukraine. In the United States, similar waves of European immigrants made their way by wagon train along the Oregon Trail to settle the western wilderness. In southern states like Texas, there was a distinct Spanish influence and up to one-third of working cowboys were either Mexican- or African-Americans, but by the 1830s, German colonies were springing up here, too.

All of these early immigrants brought their own cooking traditions, but were forced to adapt their daily meals to the harsh conditions and meager supplies at hand. They learned from the local Indigenous tribes about foraging for edible roots and berries and added all manner of local game to their menus.

The First Nations people lived off the land — Plains tribes like Cree, Crow, Blackfoot, Apache and Cheyenne relied on wild meat and fowl for their diet, which consisted mainly of dried buffalo meat, pemmican, game (moose and elk) and freshwater fish. They augmented this with berries, Vitamin-C-rich rose hips, wild onions and parsnips, and mint from the mountains for tea. These were nomadic people, moving around the prairie from summer to winter camps to hunt buffalo. Further south, Navajo, Hopi and Zuni Indians made permanent homes in Arizona, southern Utah and New Mexico, carving elaborate villages out of the sandstone cliffs and planting crops like corn, beans and squash, also adding buffalo, game and wild plants like cactus to their diets. These southern Indigenous people even raised sheep and domestic turkey, and the flavors and ingredients spread northward with the trading between settled and nomadic tribes throughout the West.

The first immigrants to North America arrived from Europe three centuries ago, mainly settling in eastern areas. It wasn't until after 1840 that the bulk of the 300,000 pioneers made the trek out West along the Oregon Trail. By 1860, the white population had grown from 20,000 to nearly 1 million, with many of these settlers staking claims and

displacing the free-roaming First Nations people from their homelands.

In 1865, there were stagecoach lines as far west as Denver, Santa Fe and Salt Lake City. In Canada, farmers were heading out in Red River carts, dragging their family possessions to prairie farmsteads past the end of the rail line in Winnipeg. (By 1885, that railway spanned Canada from sea to sea; the transcontinental U.S. railway was finished in 1869.)

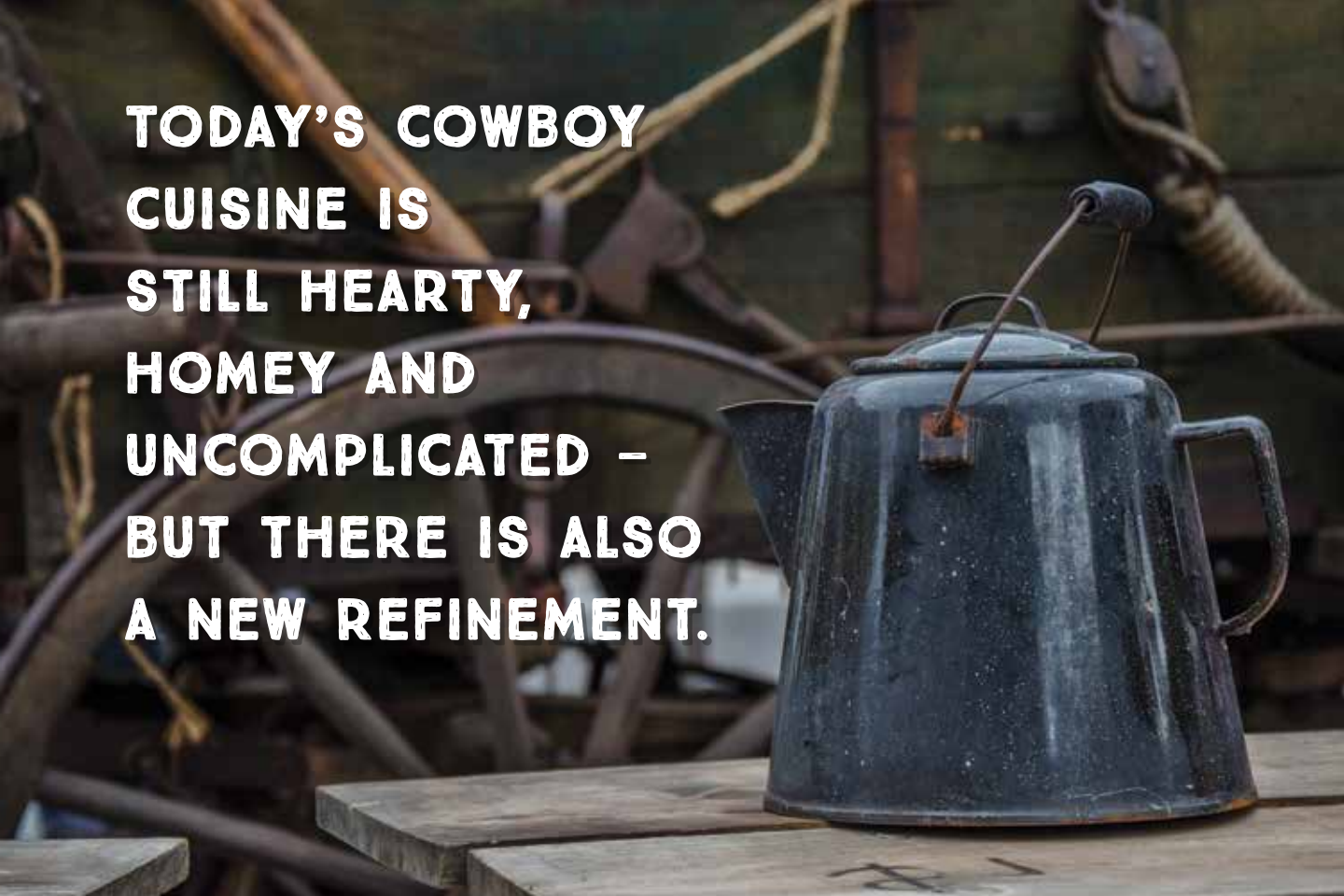
The wave of settlement continued as pioneers traveled by train and covered wagon on trails to Santa Fe and California via bustling towns in Missouri. On the trails they carried the staples of the chuckwagon cook, augmented by wild foods and sourdough breads baked on the campfire. When they arrived in western settlements, they planted what food they could grow in the area, raised poultry and pigs, and collected native plants from fields and forests.

In 1891, half of Alberta's population was indigenous, but by 1930 an eclectic mix of immigrants had arrived — mainly British, German, Ukrainian, French, Scandinavian, Dutch and Polish. Chinese workers had come to build the railways and many ended up as ranch cooks or restaurant owners in small prairie towns. A similar demographic had settled the American plains a generation earlier, influenced by earlier Hispanic settlers.

Many early immigrants to the Canadian West were also Americans, mainly the cattle men and cowboys who arrived with their herds, bringing their southern cowboy culture of foods like corn and spicy chilies.

Early settlers brought their European farming techniques and livestock to the prairies, developing a cuisine that mixed their ethnic heritage with the founding First Nations and Metis traditions, and the availability of ingredients, enjoying everything from wild duck, game and bannock to dandelion greens and spruce beer.

Since then, new waves of immigrants have brought many new ethnic influences to the kitchens of North America's western heartland. From its Anglo-French and European roots, prairie cooking has evolved to embrace the traditions of East Indians, Chinese and Vietnamese from the East; Caribbean and Central Americans from the South; and Indigenous peoples right here at home. In the American West, much of this diversity has been lost to that country's melting pot ideal of assimilation, but in Canada, where a multicultural mosaic is encouraged, many of these unique cuisines have been planted and have flourished.



**TODAY'S COWBOY
CUISINE IS
STILL HEARTY,
HOMEY AND
UNCOMPLICATED –
BUT THERE IS ALSO
A NEW REFINEMENT.**

MODERN RANCH-TO-TABLE COWBOY CUISINE

Today we're also learning a new appreciation of historic cowboy culture that opened the West. We're searching the old recipe books and resurrecting a regional cuisine for our times for this century — inspired by the cowboy cooking on the range, but updated for health and modern cooking methods.

We no longer have to bake our bread and make our beef stews in cast iron Dutch ovens surrounded by campfire coals, but we appreciate the beauty of cooking with cast iron, and yearn for those simple flavors that hark back to our western roots.

The cuisine of the cowboy has changed with the times, just enough to keep it remaining both comforting and current. We still love our beef and beans. We still organize international chili cook-offs, pride ourselves for our pancake breakfasts, and make some of the country's best beer from our own fields of golden barley. Slow Texas-style barbecue is a staple at rodeos and BBQ competitions from San Antonio, Texas, to Saskatchewan.

From wild foods like mint, mountain mushrooms and berries to the game of the forests and trout of the streams, western cuisine has indigenous inspirations. Add to that the farm-based economy of grains like wheat, corn and barley; the ranch tradition of raising beef cattle, chickens, pork and lamb, and new livestock like buffalo, farmed elk and ostrich; and the market gardening belts where vegetables flourish, and there's plenty of raw material for a creative cuisine.

Today's cowboy cuisine is still hearty, homey and uncomplicated — but there is also a new refinement. Harvests of trendy blue potatoes and designer beans are the new raw materials. Creative sausage makers have risen above the everyday pork sausage popular at pancake breakfasts to make apple chicken sausages and spicy Italian versions that end up in searing chilies and stews. Artisan butchers — like those at Valbella Meats in Canmore, Alberta — are turning local game into our own gourmet foods creative charcuterie, from air-dried buffalo prosciutto to peppered dusk breast, elk smokies and wild boar pâté.

The same thing is happening in the American south. Pendery's, spice merchants in Fort Worth since 1870, once delivered spices by stagecoach and is now doing a roaring online business in the kind of flavors that put the Lone Star state on the map — especially various peppers and chili blends such as Chiltomaline, DeWitt Clinton Pendery's 1890 mixture of ground Texas chili pods, cumin, oregano and other spices, perhaps





the West's original chili powder. But even Pendery's has found fusion flavors deep in the heart of Texas, and now their range of herbs and spices ranges from bright yellow anchote seed to ground cardamom, ginseng and crystallized ginger; the catalog also offers Indian masalas and Moroccan charmoula seasonings.

Cowboy cooking has become more interesting and unusual, but it's familiar all the same. You won't find any tropical fruits or Asian spices in this cowboy collection — but there may be something just as interesting from the forest or farm you haven't seen on your plate before.

The old staples like cornmeal and beans that cowboy Cookie worked with on the range are all here. You'll find recipes for the roundup beef stews and chilies, the old-fashioned bread and pies, and the crispy prairie oysters cooked up in a blackened skillet at branding time.

No mahi-mahi on the menu, but lots of beef, lamb and pork, free-range poultry and bison buffalo. There are rib-sticking chilies and beans, delicate dishes made with local trout, and stylish flans filled with wild Saskatoon berries.

So, travel back in time and try some comfortable chuck and some newfangled western food — hearty, healthy and homemade.

*Come and
get it!*



**IT'S A
CELEBRATION
OF FOOD FROM
THE WILD WEST,
A NEW WAY OF
LOOKING AT
THE CUISINE
OF THE
COWBOY.**





THE WILD WEST PANTRY

BEANS

A long-time staple in the cowboy cook's larder, beans are great in soups or spiced up with chilies, onions and garlic. Or try them puréed as low-fat dips, mixed with ground meat in burgers or in old-fashioned bean salads.

To prepare dry beans for cooking: Pick over beans for dirt and rocks that sometimes make their way into the mix. Soak overnight or use the following 1-hour quick-soak method: In a pot, cover beans with water and bring to a boil. Cook 2 minutes; cover and remove from heat. Let beans soak for 1 hour; drain.

You can also quick soak beans using a pressure cooker or Instapot — just cover beans with water, bring to high pressure for 1 to 3 minutes (depending on the size of beans), and reduce pressure naturally.



Don't salt your beans before cooking or they'll never soften. Beans can take 1 to 2 hours to cook, depending on their age and original condition. Don't mix beans before cooking as different beans never cook at the same rate.

When cooked, 1 lb (500 g) dried beans equals 6 or 7 cups (1.5 to 1.75 L) cooked beans. You can freeze presoaked and/or cooked beans for convenience and taste — they're better than canned beans.

Although their texture is not as nice for dishes using whole beans, canned beans are simple and fast to use, especially for dips or refried bean dishes. Rinse and drain canned beans before adding to soups and stews.

Lentils and split peas need no soaking and cook in 20 minutes to 1 hour, depending on the variety.

BEEF

Always look for U.S. Prime beef or AAA Canadian beef; this has the highest fat marbling and is best for grilling and roasting. Choose lower grades and less tender cuts for braises and stews — in fact, you sacrifice flavor if you use a prime cut in the stew or soup pot.

Roasting beef is also popular. Hip cuts (such as round, rump and sirloin tip roasts) are best when started in a very hot (500 °F/260 °C) oven for 30 minutes, uncovered, then cooked to desired doneness at a reduced temperature of 275° F (140° C). Adding 1 cup (250 mL) water to the roast pan after the initial high-temperature searing helps keep the roast moist and juicy.

BEER

The trend toward microbrewing began in the western U.S. cities of San Francisco and Seattle and has spread like a prairie fire throughout the West. Of course, beer is still the beverage of choice in this part of the world and all of the major players — from Coors to Molson's to Big Rock — make their beer in western Canada.

Microbrewers have had a huge impact on the quality of beer being consumed today, with craft beer pulled from taps in specialty pubs from Swift Current to San Francisco. Alberta's Big Rock has grown into one of the country's most successful microbreweries, now so large it's dubbed a regional brewery, and there are more than 400 craft breweries in Texas.

BERRIES

In the summer months, wild and U-pick berries can be found everywhere in the West. Among them, Saskatoon berries are the quintessential prairie berry. Also known as the serviceberry, these bush-grown berries resemble





a blueberry but with a distinctive sweet flavor and drier texture. The wild variety can still be found growing in the coulees and along river banks across the western prairies, but you can also plant your own domestic Saskatoon berry bushes and harvest crops in your own backyard, or substitute blueberries in recipes.

Other berries, from wild strawberries and raspberries to low-bush and high-bush cranberries, chokecherries, Nanking cherries and wild currants have been used by Indigenous people, settlers and current prairie residents for hundreds of years.

BUFFALO

Buffalo or bison (their proper name) once roamed the prairies in massive herds, ranging from New York to the Rocky Mountains and from Mexico to the Canada's Northwest Territories. Brought back from near extinction in the 19th century, buffalo or bison meat has gained popularity on the prairies in recent years. While still expensive to buy, it is being raised on about 200 Alberta ranches today.

Bison are grass-fed (unlike cattle, which are grain-fed) and naturally raised with no growth hormones; so, buffalo meat is considered particularly clean and healthy. Buffalo is lean and flavorful, with a taste very similar to beef. Because of its low-fat content (2.4 grams of fat per 100 grams), it must be cooked at lower temperatures (275° F/140° C for roasting) and should always be served medium or medium-rare.



BULGAR OR CRACKED WHEAT

Bulgar is made from whole kernels of wheat which are boiled, then dried and broken into bits. Cracked wheat is a different product; it is simply coarsely ground raw wheat, with the wheat germ removed to improve shelf life. Cracked wheat needs to be cooked, while bulgar only needs soaking to rehydrate.

CANOLA OIL

This light-tasting vegetable oil is produced across the prairies — Canada's own answer to the Mediterranean diet. Like olive oil, touted for its cholesterol-friendly monounsaturated fats, canola oil is also high in monounsaturates and is recommended when a strong flavor is not desired, as in baking and frying.

CORN

Every summer, westerners await the sweet corn season and the chance to enjoy fresh corn-on-the-cob. grown around the town of Taber, near Lethbridge in southern Alberta.

WILD RICE

Grown across western Canada and some U.S. states, especially in northern Alberta and Saskatchewan, wild rice or manoomin is actually the seed or grain of an aquatic prairie grass (genus *Zizania/aquatica* var.) and is the only native cereal grain in North America.

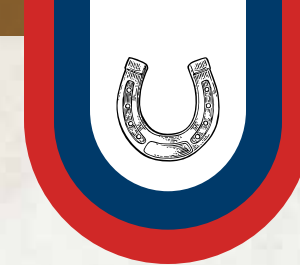
It grows in shallow lakes the wilderness of northern Canada, and was once harvested only by Indigenous people who pulled the grasses down into their canoes where they shook and collected the dried kernels. Now both native and non-native groups plant and harvest the rice commercially, some in special Hovercrafts built to skim over the water and collect the grain in big scoops. But it's still a rare commodity and therefore expensive, sometimes called the caviar of grains.

Low in fat and high in protein and Vitamin B, wild rice is boiled in 3 to 4 times its volume of water or broth, then drained. When cooked, the hard, dark brown kernels split and curl, with a nutty flavor and chewy texture.





**HERE ARE SOME IDEAS
FOR RIB-STICKING SNACKS
OR SOMETHING TO START
A MEAL WESTERN STYLE.**



APPETIZERS

Real cowboys in the Wild West wouldn't have known an hors d'oeuvre from a horse's ... well, you get the drift. Cowboys got up before dawn, bulked up on massive meat-and-beans breakfasts and never stopped for chow before sundown. Back at camp they didn't dare sneak a snack until Cookie called "Come an' git it" or "Grub pile, come a-runnin' fellers" and then they filled their plates and demolished the meal in silence, washing it all down with gallons of cowboy coffee, strong and black.

If anything, it was the latter that provided a between-meals snack — in the best camps the coffee was always on the fire, as this bit of Tex Taylor's poetry recalls:

*The coffee pot there by the fire was full
of Cookie's brew,
Hot an' black an' strong enough to float
an ole hoss shoe.*

But these days, even cowboys like to kick back with a beer and a plate of nachos or a smoky quesadilla before sitting down to supper.

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SMOKY COWBOY QUESADILLAS

SERVES 8 TO 10

The quesadilla, grilled crispy and smoky on the barbecue, is the quintessential Western snack — an idea borrowed from our neighbors south of the border but one that works well in cowboy country.

8 flour tortillas (plain, whole wheat or jalapeno flavor)

1 tbsp (15 mL) olive oil

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (175 mL) spicy salsa with hot and sweet peppers (see recipe, page 23) or store-bought salsa

4 oz (125 g) shredded smoked turkey or ham or chicken

1 cup (250 mL) shredded Monterey Jack cheese (or combination of cheeses)

1 ripe avocado or summer peach or nectarine, slivered

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (50 mL) chopped cilantro

Extra salsa as accompaniment

Preheat barbecue

- 1 Brush 4 tortillas with olive oil. Place, oiled side down, on a work surface. Divide $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (175 mL) salsa among tortillas, spreading over surface. Sprinkle with turkey, cheese, avocado and cilantro. Top with remaining tortillas, brush tops with olive oil and press together firmly.
- 2 Using a large spatula to lift filled tortillas, carefully set quesadillas on a hot barbecue grill; cook, turning once, until just browned and melted together, about 5 minutes in total. Press quesadillas lightly with a spatula as they cook, to make sure they hold together. Alternatively, cook quesadillas one at a time in a nonstick skillet over medium-high heat, about 3 minutes per side or until golden.
- 3 Cut each quesadilla into 6 wedges and serve with extra salsa for dipping.

TIP

Try making quesadillas with various fillings: chilies and asiago cheese; chopped cooked chicken with avocado and Cheddar; spicy tomato salsa, sliced black olives and farmer's cheese; refried beans, Monterey Jack cheese, avocado or tomato and cilantro. The best quesadillas have just enough filling and cheese to hold together well without being sloppy.

WILD WEST BEAN CAVIAR

WITH ROASTED TOMATOES

MAKES 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ CUPS (1.625 L)

Use 3 cans (each 19 oz/540 mL) black beans or black-eyed peas, rinsed and drained, or cook your own starting with 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups (625 mL) dried.

3 ripe tomatoes

2 tbsp (25 mL) olive oil

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (50 mL) red wine vinegar, plus a pinch of granulated sugar or balsamic vinegar

1 tbsp (15 mL) lime juice

3 cloves garlic, minced

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp (2 mL) salt

6 cups (1.5 L) cooked black beans or black-eyed peas

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 mL) chopped red onions

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 mL) chopped cilantro

1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced

Corn chips or pita chips

Preheat broiler or barbecue

- 1 Under the broiler or on the barbecue, cook tomatoes for 10 minutes, turning occasionally, or until charred on all sides. Cool; peel, seed and core. In a food processor, combine tomato flesh, olive oil, vinegar, lime juice, garlic and salt; process until smooth.
- 2 In a bowl, stir together roasted tomato sauce, beans, red onion, cilantro and jalapeno peppers. Let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes to allow flavors to develop.
- 3 Serve with corn chips and pita chips for scooping, or serve as a starter salad or side dish.



TEQUILA CHEESE BALL

SERVES 8 TO 10

This is a spicy twist on the old-fashioned cheese ball, a prairie party staple. Makes one large or several small balls.

8 oz (250 g) sharp Cheddar cheese, shredded (about 2 cups/500 mL)

8 oz (250 g) mild Cheddar cheese, shredded (about 2 cups/500 mL)

8 oz (250 g) low-fat cream cheese, cut into pieces, warmed to room temperature

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup (150 mL) finely chopped green onions

3 cloves garlic, minced

2 tbsp (25 mL) grated orange zest

2 tbsp (25 mL) gold tequila

2 tbsp (25 mL) orange-flavored liqueur

2 tsp (10 mL) curry powder

2 tsp (10 mL) dry mustard

1 tsp (5 mL) ground coriander

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp (1 mL) cayenne pepper

2 dried ancho chilies, seeded; ground or crushed

Crackers as accompaniment

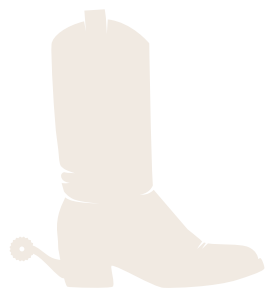
1 In a food processor, combine shredded Cheddar, cream cheese, green onions, garlic, orange zest, tequila, orange-flavored liqueur, curry powder, mustard, coriander and cayenne pepper; process until well-mixed, scraping down sides of the bowl as necessary. Transfer to a bowl. Chill until slightly firm.

2 Turn mixture onto a piece of plastic wrap; form into a large ball. Alternatively, divide mixture into parts and form into several smaller balls; or, roll into one or more logs. Wrap in plastic wrap. Chill 1 hour or until firm.

3 Roll in crushed ancho chilies. Refrigerate until ready to use. Serve with crackers.

TIP

Use dried New Mexico chilies if anchos are not available.



COWBOY BEEF JERKY

Beef jerky is a cowboy classic but it's also perfect to take along in your backpack for overnight hikes.

$1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs (750 g) flank steak, cut along the grain into thin strips about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (2 mm) thick

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 mL) Worcestershire sauce

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (50 mL) soy sauce

1 tbsp (15 mL) brown sugar or honey

1 tsp (5 mL) freshly ground black pepper

1 tsp (5 mL) seasoned salt or steak spice or seasoned meat tenderizer

1 tsp (5 mL) onion powder

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp (2 mL) garlic powder

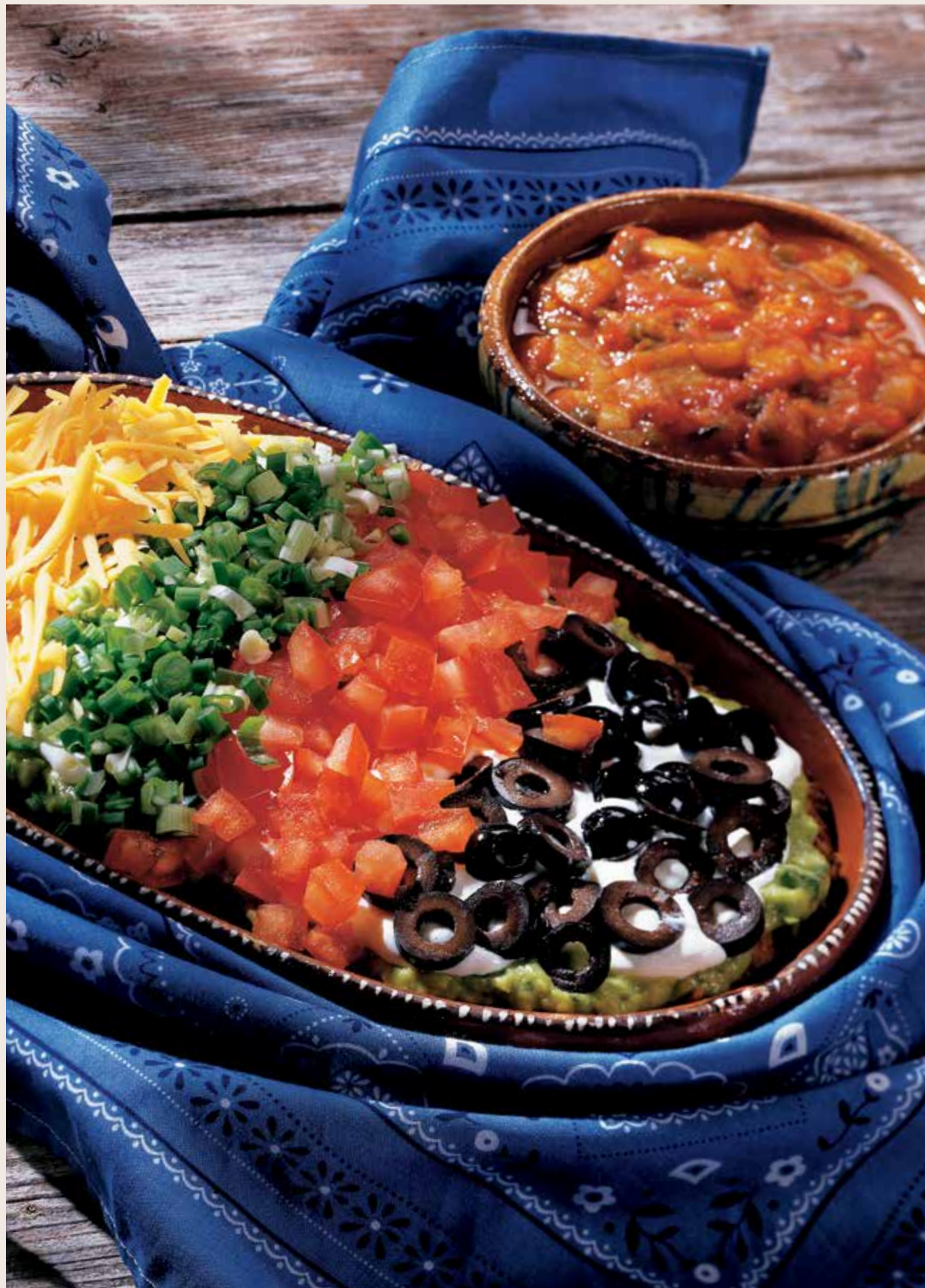
1 In a zippered plastic bag, combine steak strips, Worcestershire sauce, soy sauce, brown sugar, pepper, seasoned salt, onion powder and garlic powder. Marinate overnight in refrigerator.

2 Preheat oven to its lowest setting (about 140°F/60°C). Lift beef strips out of marinade; arrange on a wire rack on a baking sheet. Discard remaining marinade. Bake jerky with the oven door slightly ajar for 8 to 10 hours, turning beef strips once, or until dry and chewy. Check often; jerky should be dry but should bend without breaking. If it's brittle, you've cooked it too long for snacking but it can still be kept for rehydrating in soups and stews.

TIPS

You can also use this marinade for venison.

Instead of using the oven, dry your jerky in a home dehydrator, according to manufacturer's directions.



BEYOND BEAN DIP

MAKES ABOUT 7 CUPS (1.75 L)

Although the texture of canned beans is inferior for dishes that call for whole beans, they are simple and fast to use — especially for dips or refried bean dishes.

BEAN LAYER

1 can (14 oz/398 mL) refried beans or 1 can (19 oz [540 mL]) pinto beans

¼ cup (50 mL) sour cream

1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced

1 clove garlic, minced

1 tsp (5 mL) chili powder

½ tsp (2 mL) ground cumin

Guacamole layer

2 ripe avocados

3 tbsp (45 mL) lemon juice or lime juice

3 green onions, minced

1 tsp (5 mL) minced jalapeno pepper

GARNISH

1 cup (250 mL) sour cream

2 green onions, chopped

1 tomato, seeded and chopped

1 cup (250 mL) shredded Cheddar cheese

½ cup (125 mL) sliced black olives

Regular and blue corn tortilla chips as accompaniments

1 If using pinto beans, rinse and drain. Purée beans in food processor; transfer to a bowl. Stir in sour cream, jalapeno, garlic, chili powder and cumin. Set aside.

2 In another bowl, mash avocados with lemon juice. Stir in green onions and jalapeno peppers. Set aside.

3 Spread bean dip in a thin layer over a deep 12-inch (30 cm) platter. Carefully spread guacamole over bean layer. Spread with sour cream, making sure to cover guacamole completely to keep it from darkening. Starting at the outside edge of the plate, make a 2-inch (5 cm) ring of shredded cheese. Inside that ring, sprinkle green onions in a ring. Follow with black olives and finish with a pile of chopped tomato in the center of the plate. Serve with lots of regular and blue corn tortilla chips for scooping.

TIP

Rinse and drain canned beans before using.

PRAIRIE OYSTERS

SERVES 4

Prairie oysters (or mountain oysters as they're also known) are a traditional treat during spring branding, when calves are castrated.

The tender organ meat is the size of a large chicken liver and actually tastes a little like chicken livers. Testicles from grown bulls are much larger and must be sliced to 1/4-inch (5 mm) thickness before cooking — not my personal favorite.

1 lb (500 g) calf testicles (about 24)

2 eggs

¼ cup (50 mL) milk

1 cup (250 mL) cornmeal

½ cup (125 mL) flour

½ cup (125 mL) finely crushed soda crackers (about 14 crackers)

1 tsp (5 mL) salt

¼ tsp (1 mL) freshly ground black pepper

¼ tsp (1 mL) cayenne pepper to taste

Canola oil for frying

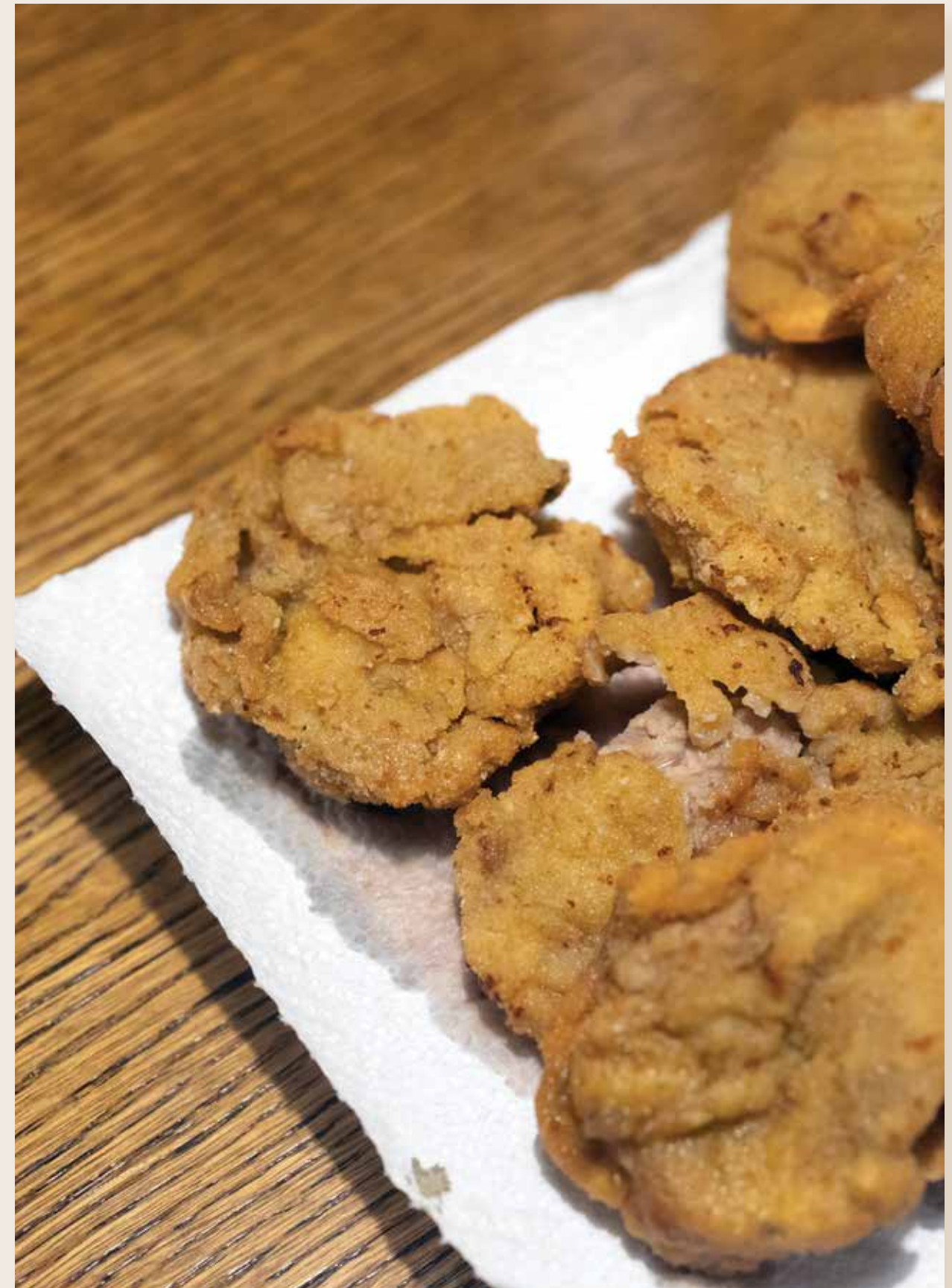
1 Butterfly the oysters by slicing open lengthwise without cutting completely in half. Peel off outer membrane. Cover with salted water and soak overnight in refrigerator.

2 In a bowl, beat eggs and milk until frothy. In a separate bowl, stir together cornmeal, flour, cracker crumbs, salt, pepper and cayenne pepper.

3 In a large cast iron skillet, heat about ½ inch (1 cm) of canola oil over medium-high heat. Drain oysters. In batches, dip in beaten egg mixture, roll in cornmeal mixture and fry in hot oil 5 minutes, turning halfway, or until golden brown and cooked through. Serve hot.

TIP

Peeling the smaller calf testicles is time-consuming but important, unless you like your oysters chewy. One rancher told me he likes his cooked “schnitzel-style” — the meat pounded lightly to flatten before breading and frying in olive oil.



BLACK BEAN NACHOS

SERVES 4

Cowboys may not have eaten nachos at the turn of the century but in small-town cafes or rural bars, you'll always find nachos to start a meal.

SALSA

2 plum tomatoes, seeded and chopped
¼ cup (50 mL) chopped onions
1 tbsp (15 mL) freshly squeezed lime juice
1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced
2 tbsp (25 mL) minced cilantro
1 tbsp (15 mL) chopped parsley
1 tsp (5 mL) chopped fresh thyme
1 tsp (5 mL) chopped fresh oregano
1 green onion, chopped

REFRIED BEANS

1 cup (250 mL) cooked black beans
1 tbsp (15 mL) minced garlic
2 hot chili peppers, minced
¼ cup (50 mL) chopped cilantro
Salt to taste

GUACAMOLE

2 ripe avocados
3 tbsp (45 mL) freshly squeezed lime juice
1 tsp (5 mL) minced garlic
¼ tsp (1 mL) dried thyme leaves
¼ tsp (1 mL) dried oregano
1 jalapeno pepper, chopped
12 cups (3 L) combination of yellow and blue tortilla chips
½ lb (250 g) Monterey Jack cheese, shredded

- SALSA:** In a bowl, stir together tomatoes, onions, lime juice, jalapeno, cilantro, parsley, thyme, oregano and green onion. Marinate for 1 hour in the refrigerator.
- REFRIED BEANS:** Mash beans with a fork or purée in food processor. In a frying pan, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add mashed beans, garlic, chili peppers, and cilantro; cook for 3 minutes, stirring, or until soft and fragrant. Season with salt to taste. Set aside.
- GUACAMOLE:** In a bowl and using a fork, mash avocado with lime juice. Stir in garlic, thyme, oregano and jalapeno. Set aside.
- ASSEMBLY:** Preheat oven to 400° F (200° C). Put tortilla chips on a large ovenproof dish. Distribute refried beans and salsa evenly over chips. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake for 5 minutes or until cheese is melted and dish is hot. Serve with guacamole on the side.

TIPS

Use canned beans, rinsed and drained, or cook your own. Start with 1 cup (250 mL) dried black beans.

CHILI CON QUESO

SERVES 6 TO 8

This is one of those times when only processed cheese will do—it simply melts to the perfect consistency for dunking your favorite taco chips or drizzling over tostadas. You can also substitute one can of Ro-Tel brand tomatoes (with chilies) for the diced tomatoes and canned green chilies.

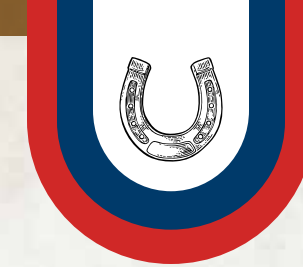
½ cup (125 mL) whole milk
6 oz (175 g) cream cheese
14 oz (400 g) processed cheese (like Velveeta), cubed
one 14-oz (398-mL) can diced tomatoes, drained one
3½-oz (110-mL) can diced green chilies
3 green onions, finely chopped
½ tsp (2 mL) chili paste
½ tsp (2 mL) cumin
1 Tbsp (15 mL) chili powder
1 Tbsp (15 mL) chopped cilantro
corn tortilla chips
broccoli and cauliflower florets

- Combine the milk and cream cheese in a double boiler and stir over simmering water until hot and melted, about 10 minutes. Add the cubes of processed cheese, stirring until melted and smooth.
- Stir in the diced tomatoes, green chilies, green onions, chili paste, cumin, and chili powder. Simmer and stir frequently for 20 to 30 minutes.
- Just before serving, stir in the cilantro. Keep the dip warm in a fondue pot (an electric pot or one with a solid fuel heat source). Serve with tortilla chips and vegetables for dipping, or for drizzling over tostadas.

TIP

A tostada is like a loaded Mexican pizza—a crispy corn tortilla topped with beans (chili), cheese sauce, shredded lettuce, tomatoes, and olives. Just fry a dozen corn tortillas in oil until crispy, set out the chili, cheese sauce, and garnishes—then let your guests create their own spicy combinations.

**COME AND
GET IT –
SOUP'S ON!**



SOUPS

Soup has long been a prairie pioneer tradition — old wood stoves on the farm were temperamental for baking, but a soup bone could simmer on the back of the stove all day without watching. On the ranch, it was customary to eat a large meal at noon (dinner). Then, at suppertime, mid-day leftovers could easily be recycled into soups and served with bread for the evening meal. In the summer time, gardens provided lots of vegetables for the soup pot and there was a good supply of ham hocks and soup bones for stocks when livestock was butchered. Beans, rice and barley were also staples of the soup pot, and there were always winter vegetables — like potatoes, carrots, parsnips and onions — that could be brought up from the root cellars for soups.

This collection of soups ranges from old-fashioned corn chowder, split pea and bean soups to hearty soups made with regional ingredients such as wild rice and forest mushrooms.

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FRESH CORN CHOWDER

SERVES 4

Corn is a staple food throughout the West, one that finds its roots with early Native tribes of the American South. The earliest explorers found corn planted in Native villages in the mid-1500s, where women used fresh corn in stews, dried it for cornmeal or boiled it with wood ashes to make hominy.

- 2 medium new red-skinned potatoes, scrubbed
 - 1 tbsp (15 mL) butter
 - 1/2 cup (125 mL) chopped celery
 - 1 cup (250 mL) chopped Bermuda, Spanish or Vidalia onion
 - 1 1/2 cups (625 mL) fresh corn kernels or frozen corn (use frozen corn in winter months)
 - 1/2 tsp (2 mL) salt
 - 1/2 tsp (2 mL) dried basil
 - 1/4 cup (50 mL) minced fresh parsley
 - 2 cups (500 mL) skim milk
 - White pepper to taste
- 1** Boil potatoes in their skins 20 minutes or until tender. Drain, saving the cooking water. Cool potatoes slightly and dice; set aside.
 - 2** In a saucepan, melt butter over medium-high heat. Add celery and onion; cook for 3 minutes or until barely tender. Stir in corn, potatoes, salt, basil and parsley. Reduce heat to medium, cover and cook for 5 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
 - 3** Stir in the milk and 1 cup (250 mL) of the potato cooking water. Heat gently. Season to taste with white pepper and serve immediately.

ROOT VEGETABLE SOUP

SERVES 4

The flavorful root vegetables featured in this creamy soup are available throughout the year. It's a delicious combination — and very low in fat.

2 tsp (10 mL) canola oil
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 cup (250 mL) chopped onions
4 cups (1 L) chicken stock
1 potato, peeled and chopped
3/4 cup (175 mL) chopped carrots
3/4 cup (175 mL) chopped peeled sweet potatoes
1/2 cup (125 mL) chopped parsnip
2 tbsp (25 mL) chopped fresh dill

- 1** In a saucepan, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onions and garlic; cook, stirring occasionally, 4 minutes or until tender. Stir in stock, potato, carrot, sweet potato and parsnip. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, covered, for 25 to 35 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
- 2** Transfer soup to a blender or food processor; purée until smooth. Return to saucepan. Stir in fresh dill. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

TIP

For a spicy garnish, soak 3 dried ancho chilies in boiling water to cover for 30 minutes. Drain, remove stems and seeds and purée chilies with 1/4 cup (50 mL) chicken stock until smooth. Combine with enough low-fat sour cream to make a creamy sauce and use to drizzle over this soup, bean soup or pumpkin soup or other creamy concoctions for a blast of chili flavor.



SCOTCH BROTH

SERVES 8

This recipe comes from Calgary's Highlander Hotel. It's wonderfully thick and hearty soup — and a tribute to the Scots who first settled the Old West.

8 oz (250 g) boneless lamb shoulder or shank, trimmed of fat and finely chopped (include some meaty bones, if possible)
1 onion, diced
3 stalks celery, diced
1/2 tsp (2 mL) vegetable oil
8 cups (2 L) chicken stock
1 3/4 cups (425 mL) diced white turnips (about 2)
1 1/4 cups (300 mL) diced carrots (about 3)
1 cup (250 mL) pearl barley
2 tsp (10 mL) minced garlic
1 tsp (5 mL) freshly ground black pepper
1/2 tsp (2 mL) dried thyme leaves
Salt to taste

- 1** If you have lamb bones, combine with chopped lamb, onions, celery and oil in a shallow pan; roast in a 450° F (230° C) oven for 20 minutes or until browned and transfer to saucepan. If not, heat oil in saucepan over medium-high heat. Add onions and celery; cook 5 minutes or until starting to brown. Add the chopped lamb; cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, or until browned.
- 2** Stir in the chicken broth, turnips and carrots; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer for 15 minutes. Stir in barley, garlic, pepper and thyme; simmer, uncovered, 45 to 60 minutes or until the barley is tender and the soup is thick.
- 3** If using bones, remove them from the soup; add any meat from the bones back into the soup. Heat through and season to taste with salt.



PRAIRIE BEAN SOUP

SERVES 6

To speed up the bean soaking process, place beans in a pot and cover with about 3 inches (7.5 cm) of cold water. Set pot over high heat and bring beans to a rolling boil. Cover the pot, remove from heat and let beans stand for 1 hour. Drain and proceed with your recipe as if you'd soaked your beans overnight.

1 lb (500 g) Great Northern beans, soaked overnight in water to cover
3 slices smoky bacon, chopped
Pinch baking soda
2 onions, chopped
2 carrots, chopped
1 small white turnip, chopped
1 stalk celery, finely chopped
1 cup (250 mL) skim milk
Salt and pepper to taste
2 cloves garlic, pressed or minced
1 tsp (5 mL) chopped fresh thyme

1. Place drained beans in a large soup pot with 8 cups (2 L) water, bacon and baking soda. Bring to a boil, skimming scum that rises to the surface. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, for 45 minutes or until beans are softened. Stir in onions, carrot, turnip and celery; cook, uncovered, for 45 minutes longer or until beans and vegetables are tender.
2. Transfer one-third of the soup to a food processor or blender; purée until smooth, then return to soup pot. Add milk and heat through. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Stir in garlic and thyme and serve.

POTATO SOUP

WITH WATERCRESS

SERVES 6

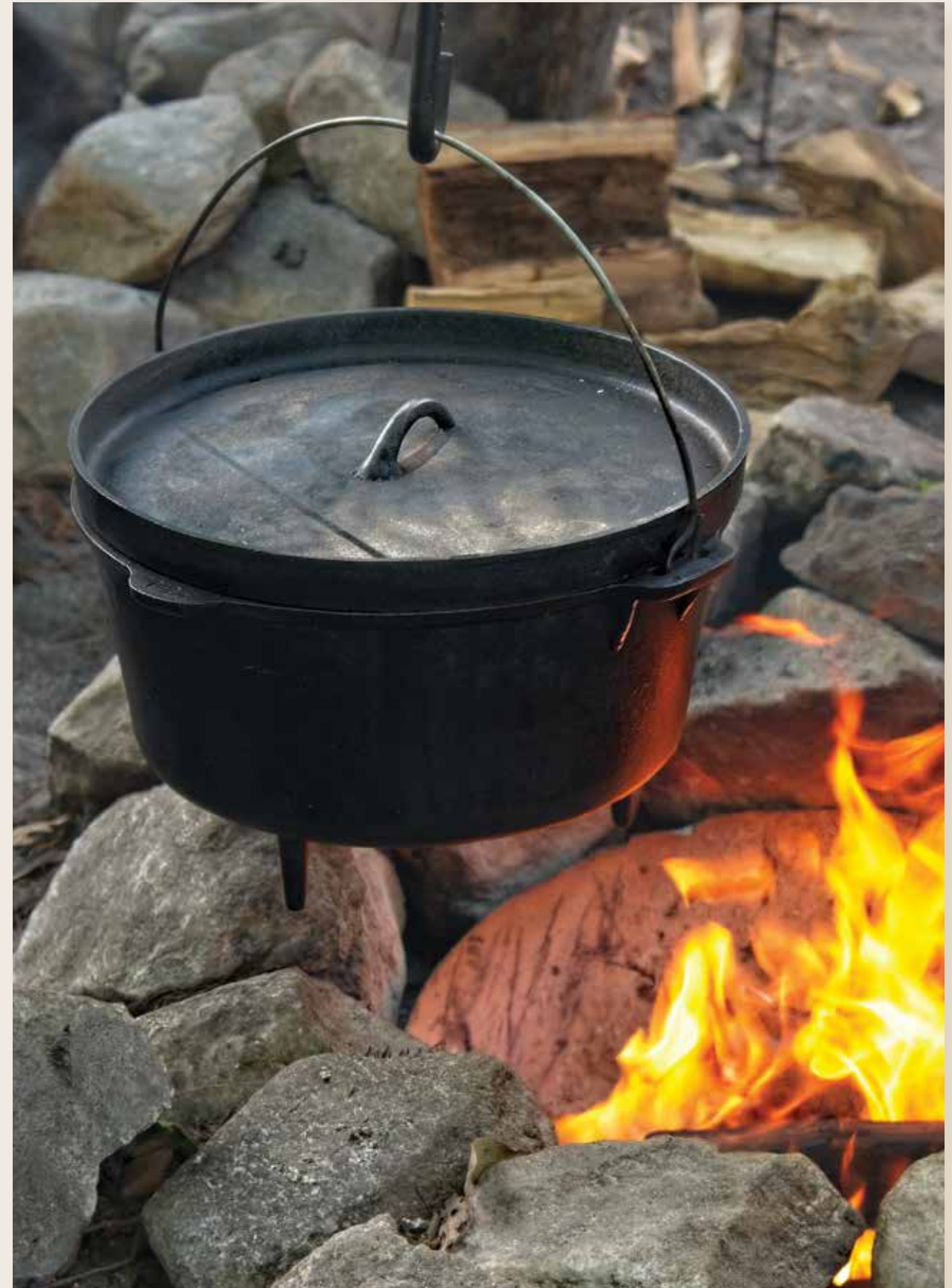
Watercress, which grows wild along Alberta rivers, is part of a traditional Native diet. The peppery leaves are shiny, small and round, and the plant has white flowers that grow in clusters. When you find watercress, don't uproot the plant but clip it off at the water surface.

2 tsp (10 mL) olive oil
1 yellow onion, chopped
6 green onions, minced
2 tbsp (25 mL) flour
4 cups (1 L) chicken stock
2 lbs (1 kg) Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch (1 cm) cubes
1 cup (250 mL) evaporated skim milk
1 bunch watercress, stemmed and chopped
Salt and pepper to taste

- 1** In a saucepan heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion and half of the green onions; cook for 3 minutes or until softened. Add stock and potatoes. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium and cook 10 minutes or until potatoes are tender.
- 2** Stir in evaporated milk and chopped watercress; cook a few minutes longer or until greens are wilted. Transfer all or part of soup to a blender or food processor; purée until smooth and return to saucepan. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Garnish with remaining green onions.

TIP

Yukon Gold potatoes give this soup a wonderful golden color and buttery flavor.





TURKEY AND CORN CHOWDER

SERVES 6

Here's an easy soup to pull together from pantry items when you have leftover turkey or roast chicken in the freezer. Served with cornbread, it makes a pleasingly simple supper after those indulgent holiday meals are over.

1 tbsp (15 mL) canola oil
1 onion, minced
2 cloves garlic, minced
3 stalks celery, minced
1 red bell pepper, chopped
2 carrots, chopped
2 tsp (10 mL) dried oregano
1 1/2 tsp (7 mL) ground cumin
2 cans (each 10 oz/284 mL) chicken stock, diluted with 2 cans of water
1 can (7 1/2 oz/213 mL) tomato sauce
1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced
2 cups (500 mL) corn
2 cups (500 mL) chopped cooked turkey
Salt, pepper and hot sauce to taste
Crushed tortilla chips or fried corn tortilla strips (see Southwest Soup, page 42) as garnish

- 1** In a large saucepan, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion, garlic, celery, red pepper and carrots; cook for 10 minutes or until tender.
- 2** Stir in oregano and cumin; cook, stirring, 1 minute or until spices are fragrant. Stir in stock, tomato sauce and jalapeno. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and simmer for 10 minutes.
- 3** Stir in turkey and corn; cook for 20 minutes longer or until carrots and corn are tender. Season to taste with hot sauce, salt and pepper. Serve garnished with crushed tortilla chips or fried corn tortilla strips.

MODERN RANCH-TO-TABLE COWBOY CUISINE

The Wild West Cookbook brings you a new taste of cowboy comfort food, inspired by the chuckwagon and homestead cooks of the Old West, and today's western ranch house and restaurant fare. It's a celebration of both historic and modern cowboy cuisine — homey and uncomplicated but refined recipes featuring today's farm-to-table ingredients, from heirloom potatoes and beans to artisanal sausages.

The Wild West Cookbook brings together a collection of 90 classic and modern recipes, from Tex-Mex Smokey Cowboy Quesadillas or Cowboy Beef Jerky to ranch-classics like Prairie Oysters, Stampede Rodeo Beef on a Bun, and contemporary favourites like Flank Steak with Rye Whisky Marinade, and Spicy Caesar Salad with Smoked Chicken and Chilli Croutons.

Grab your ten-gallon hat and discover the regional histories and foods that blend to create the familiar and delicious comforts of Wild West cooking.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Includes a fun and informative history of cowboy cuisine, lore and nostalgia
- 90 recipes for homestyle meals and desserts
- Includes both food and lifestyle photography
- Includes directions on how to stock the perfect Wild West Pantry

AUTHOR BIO

Cinda Chavich is a long-time food journalist, author and former newspaper food editor. She specializes in food and wine, cultural history, lifestyle and trends, and is a frequent contributor to magazines, radio and newspapers, along with her food and travel website, TasteReport.com. She lives in British Columbia.

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MARKETING & PUBLICITY

- Robert Rose will launch a targeted marketing and publicity campaign across North American platforms.
- Blogger and reviewer campaign targeting all food sites, with a focus on Western and cowboy themed food outlets.
- Strategic social media campaign across publisher platforms and channels (Website, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, Newsletters).
- Focus on special online and virtual opportunities for advertising and direct to consumer marketing.

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