



KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly



More Fall

Rituals

Many of you let me know how you enjoyed the column "Fall Rituals." You also let me know that you are looking forward to the activities of cranberry and clamming, of fishing, wild flowering and birdwatching and maybe mushrooming.

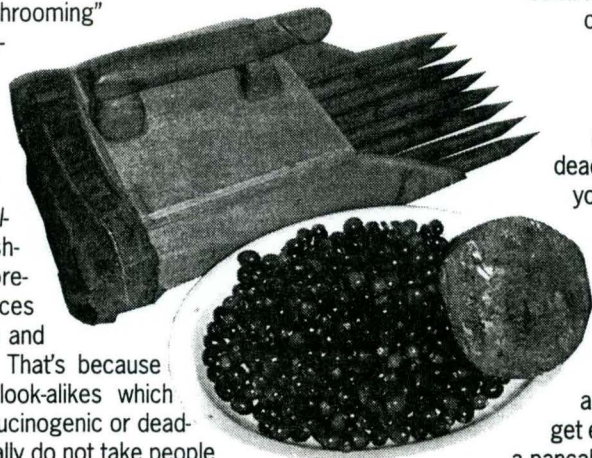
continued on page 19

continued from page 18

I write "maybe mushrooming"

because I don't advocate this activity for everyone. Mycology is not for beginners, my godparents started me off at age 7 with the *Armillaria mellea*, the honey mushroom, which they preserved in brine. Sources always list it as edible and choice—with caution. That's because there are so many look-alikes which might be indelible, hallucinogenic or deadly poisonous. I personally do not take people mushrooming because mycology is a constant study which requires great attention to detail and can ever be surprising. The honey mushroom has rhizomes, lateral underground runners like beach grass, and can be quite abundant. We used to find them by tree stumps.

Here on the Cape, *Boletes* are the easiest, edible abundant mushroom to gather. Polypores, not gills, fleshy and the warm fresh-baked bun look. If you can't eat them all at once, they don't keep, but disintegrate quickly. Don't be frustrated, for those you want to preserve, half cook them by slicing them and sauteing them in butter, cool them then into containers and into the freezer. Or, remove the stems, place the caps pore side down on your oven racks with the pilot on and let them dry slowly until they look like



buffalo chips. Store them in a big jar, grate them into sauces or break them up for soups, stews and marinades.

Boletes were Emperor Claudius' favorite food. After suffering polio, strokes, gastro intestinal problems, poor circulation and many assassination attempts, they finally got him by slipping a slice of a deadly mushroom into his plate of boletes. Be careful! So, you've decided not to mushroom on your own? Wise choice.

But what about the cranberries, you asked, what can One make besides cranberry sauce? You can boil a few until they pop and then throw your oatmeal into the boil. Maybe a few chopped dates or raisins and a bit of ginger too. You can cut them in half and ad them to your pancake mix. Left uncut they don't get enough heat or time to burst in the time it takes to cook a pancake. Bread, cakes, muffins can be obvious possibilities, but don't forget stuffings, along with dried apricots cut up and soaked in hot water and sesame seeds to make a great-tasting filler. Cranberries and oysters make another great stuffing. Stir in a small amount of honey. Cranberries make an excellent wine. For 5 gallon supply, mix the following, bottle & allow to ferment: 20qts of cranberries, 5 lbs of raising, 15 lbs sugar, 5 tsp yeast nutrient, 3 tsp pectic enzyme, yeast and water.

From primary fermentor to secondary fermentor, to aging to palate, to belly to head. A superb beverage when the snow pelts the windows. it may never be better than when you consume it in the bog scooping the berries for the next batch. Taking a break

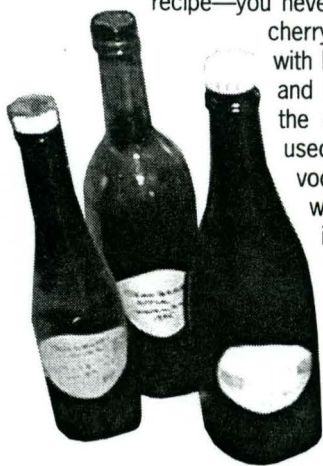
continued on page 20

continued from page 19

with a cornish game hen stuffed with cranberries plus a jug of vintage cranberry wine just might be the epitome of comfort. As you throw the bones through the air to all your creature company and rinse you fingers in bog water, Variations on cranberry wine can be made by experimenting with oranges, apricots, apples, or grapes. I was experimenting with these combinations long before the non-alcoholic combos appeared on supermarket shelves.

Turning beach plums into wine can be tricky. One green plum and every drop will be acidic. So beach plums may be better used as a liqueur. Cranberries, being acid, also make a good liqueur. Robin Garran and Priscilla Jacket both make excellent liqueurs. Blueberries make a great heavy wine. The port version stands up to cheese and nuts. The claret is quite like a Medoc and can stand up to beef or lamb. Choke cherries—scarcer every year—can also pass the grade. Elderberries are like the “no fault” bread

recipe—you never get a bad bottle. Wild black cherry is heavy, gooseberry varies with location. They're domestic now and location and care can change the color and taste. Rice can be used to make saki; potatoes for a vodka-like wine; cracked corn for a whiskey-like wine. But, more importantly, get out of that cel-



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lar and onto the flats.

Soft shelled or “piss” clams (because they squirt to let you know where they are), those devilishly good bivalves are scarcer too. They demand a longer walk to their remote-from-quahog area but are worth the glorious struggle. The larger one can be prepared as fried clams, the smaller ones for steamed clams & broth. Dip shucked clams into the broth then melted butter and slurp! left-over butter into the broth. The brine is mellow and delicious, but don't drink too much of it since the “salts” and will get you running.

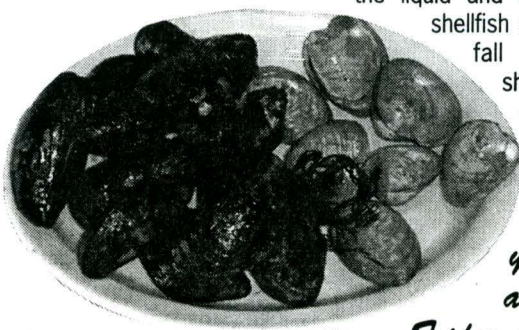
After you've spent a glorious Friday or Sunday scratching for clams, fill the bucket with water covering the clams. Throw in a cup of cornmeal. The next day when you rinse and sort the clams you'll notice the bottom of the bucket heavy with sand. The corn meal passes through the clams digestive system and pulls the sand grains out too.

No need to do that for quahogs on the half shell, they have a tight seal and don't take in sand. Serve small quahogs— little

continued on page 21

continued from page 20

necks and cherrystones—on the half shell. They can also go well with pasta. Scrub them clean and drop them in your sauce just before serving, They will open up in less than two minutes. Serve them immediately shells and all. It's easier to toss the pasta with



the liquid and then add the shellfish so they won't fall out of their shells. The larger quahogs can be stuffed, or

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used in clam chowder or clam pie. Get Howard Witcham's cook books and try them in a variety of ways: cataplanta with linguica, bouillabaisse or Jackson Lambert's "Drunken Quahogs."

For your fish, everybody has their favorite way. Fried, steamed, baked. How about building a smoker? Big! Cheap! Fun! Get a 20 gallon galvanized garbage can, 12 stove bolts, 3 stainless steel refrigerator racks from the metal dump, an old steel frying pan with the handle taken off, a piece of sheet metal from the dump cut round to extend a bit beyond the circumference of the fry pan and a burner from an electric range—now get out of the dump.

Get a length of wire and a new plug and hacksaw the refrigerator racks round to fit into the garbage can. Space them evenly by drilling 12 holes, 4 holes for each level you want and put in the stove bolts. Cut a square at the bottom for the wire to the heating element to connect, long enough to reach an outdoor outlet. Cut another opening 2" or so above the frying pan on the outlet. Place the round sheet metal with a tab cut out through the cut opening—this way whatever you are smoking will not spatter onto your woodchips and put them out, but the smoke can circulate. Place racks on the stove bolts.

You can do 3 dozen tinkers or 8-12 bluefish filets, mussels (the best!) or oysters if you put cake racks on the wider openings of the fridge racks, turkey, mozzarella cheese, anything you want to smoke. So, first go into the woods and look for dead, dried, hard wood. Cut into chunks and store. I put them in an old wash boiler. If you're lazy, buy chips. then go fishing, shellfishing and set up your own wee smokehouse. Cost? \$10!

All this will keep you so busy, you'll never know your summer friends have left until they show up on your doorstep next June, wanting to try all those off-season bounties.