

COOKING WITH FIRE IN PUBLIC SPACE



(what happens in a
) neighbourhood
(when you light a fire)

(CELOS/ the centre for
local research into
public space
Dufferin Grove Park
Toronto)

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INTRODUCTION

This is a booklet for people interested in cooking with fire in public space. It covers hibachis and portable barbecues, campfires, and outdoor wood-fired bake-ovens, with an afterword on food carts and the street food that can be cooked on them.

The public space where my experience is based is a mid-sized downtown park in Toronto, called Dufferin Grove Park. In the summer of 1993, half a dozen friends began a project there, which we called “the big backyard.” As part of that project we started cooking over campfires with a small group of children aged 6-12 who had settled on that park as their “turf” and spent most of their days hanging around there, on their own.

Two years later we took another step, building a wood-fired bread oven. The oven eventually had so many people using it that after five years we built a second one. People who come from other neighbourhoods, or who live near this park and are moving away, have often asked how they could get an oven built in their local park. So this booklet relates what my friends and I learned as we cooked and baked with fire in our park.

As I describe each kind of cooking fire, one of my purposes is to help readers persuade their own park authorities, first, to allow these activities, and secondly to make sure all the necessary equipment is there. For example, the hard ground of a city park, compacted by many decades of city feet, is not always a good place to spread a blanket for a picnic. People need a place to sit, off the ground. The necessary equipment is a picnic table, and if a park has too few picnic tables, chances are there won't be many picnics.

I will also describe, in a general way, what worked for people at Dufferin Grove Park in cooking over fires of various sorts. It's easy to be clumsy, cooking as a nomad might, in the open air, but without the skills that nomads have. (A few of us got some inspiration about being more graceful from a homeless Ukrainian group who lived in our park for a while. They wouldn't talk to anyone, but as we watched them from a distance we saw how they arranged their mealtimes, their wash-days, their reading and nap-times, their storage problems and their campaigns to get through the night. They were skillful, they left no tracks, and they made living in the open air look like an art.) Early photos of our cooking fires show the ground littered with boxes and dishes and styrofoam plates. We learned, but some readers of this booklet will probably be more graceful right from the start than we were.

There are some tricks in this booklet for engaging the bureaucracy when there's a problem, and there are other tricks for keeping a low profile when you don't want to attract their attention. There are also various ways of diminishing the power of people who want to do damage - vandalism - in a park, ways which I'll systematize into a list for this booklet. Any additions for future booklets, from readers who have other ideas, will be very welcome. Thwarting vandals is a pretty interesting game, sometimes with a bitter taste, but more often successful than you'd expect.

For the most complicated project, building a community bake oven, I will set out the particular steps we went through, trying to remember the main mistakes we made, so the reader might benefit from our errors.

There are also some recipes in this booklet, and some cooking-fire-related stories from our park. The largest number of stories concerns what went on around the oven, maybe because the oven was the most exotic, unexpected thing we did here. Part of the motive in telling the stories is to make it obvious that you can be clumsy and foolish as we often were, and

still have a very good time. Another part is to show how plentiful the gifts of ordinary people are. When people are not prevented from using their gifts, there is no real scarcity of the kinds of adventures we've had in our park. Transplanted elsewhere they'll take on different forms, equally interesting.



ABOUT DUFFERIN GROVE PARK

This park covers fourteen acres in west-downtown Toronto, about the area of two city blocks. The two park ovens are next to some flower and vegetable gardens, with split-rail fences to keep dogs out. Roses grow over the fences, and beans and squashes in season. The park has the usual sports areas and big old trees, but also some wildflower beds, a little native-plants marsh with a fountain, a sand-pit where children can build tipis and other kinds of forts, and a double-pad outdoor artificial ice rink for the winter. An old field house next to the soccer area, built in 1913, now houses the Clay and Paper Theatre Company, whose members construct their giant puppets out on the park lawn during the warm months. The company stores some of their puppets in the park's rink house garage, suspended from the high ceilings overtop the rink tractor. They've done a park production of some kind for the past five years, usually touring other city parks afterwards. Last Hallowe'en they put on a parade involving many hundreds of people, which started in the park but then hit the major streets in this neighbourhood, drawing another thousand people out of their houses and their stores, dancing in the streets.

Our park has several campfire areas, one near the sandpit and another near the basketball court, and, unlike many other parks in this city, it also has lots of picnic tables and benches. Some of the benches are cast-offs from locker rooms, backless and by now very weathered, but not anchored to the ground. Others are benches made by some of the teenagers working for us, using old railway ties and scrap lumber from the Park Maintenance yard. These benches wander all over the park, depending on who moves them to their picnic or their conversation, but they almost never seem to wander right

out. Theft and graffiti are not common in this park, even though the park is located in an economically mixed area sometimes referred to in the newspapers as "the troubled west end."

The wood ovens are - by intention - near the basketball court and the ice rink. On summer evenings there is sometimes a haze of marijuana smoke near the ovens, and police cruisers drive over the grass from time to time looking for their suspects. In the winter, the air near the ovens can get a little blue with the four-letter word that forms the language matrix for some of the shinny hockey players at the rink.

But mixed into this racy atmosphere, also, is the wood-smoke drifting from the ovens, summer and winter. (Yes, winter - even on the coldest days it's possible to bake bread in an outdoor wood-oven.) If it's really cold out, some skaters come over when the oven nearest the rink is being fired, to try to warm themselves. But the fire in the bread oven is not very warming, since the oven was ingeniously designed to channel all the heat into its dome and its hearth. This means that the skaters eventually go inside the rink clubhouse to warm up (a clubhouse with no membership fee - if you walk in, you're a member). Some skaters stay in there by the woodstove for hours, talking about the big questions or playing checkers - and also, eating slices of really excellent bread and butter.

Dufferin Grove Park has become like this over the last seven or eight years. There was no big plan, just an idea that a park could be a place where people find out who their neighbours are. If their neighbours are younger or older or richer or poorer or different-looking, or with different manners, so much the better. The fabric of neighbourhood life is meant to be textured

and colourful! And since, across those differences, admiration and sometimes friendship have resulted, people say “what a great park we have.” It’s the people who are great, but they attribute the good they see to the park.

One thing is true: it’s possible to arrange things in a park, or in other kinds of public space, so that it becomes much easier for the people who come there to enjoy one another. This doesn’t mean they talk to each other, necessarily. Cities are places where many people desire distance from others. But even when people are just watching one another, they can find interest and enjoyment in what they see and who they see. The tall trees and the flower gardens in the park create a backdrop to the scenes that play out there; the beauty of the setting makes what people are doing look even more interesting.

When we began having cooking fires at the park eight years ago, everything changed. We thought that fire and food would draw people in, giving strangers an excuse to have a conversation. That was just common sense, and it certainly turned out to be true. We didn’t think so much about the beauty of the fire itself until the campfires were frequently in the park, in all weathers. A campfire in the rain, for instance, with steam hissing off the lid of the soup pot, is lovely. People don’t want to leave such a sight just because it’s wet out. They sometimes get out garbage bags instead and hold them over their heads like a tarp - a huddle of damp people, with drops of water rolling off their noses. It’s a lot like camping, except that the people in the huddle might have met only an hour before, and by the time the rain stops, the sun comes out, and the soup is cooked, they may have discovered that they live only blocks apart and their children go to the same school. The soup becomes a memorable adventure. Whether the memory is of the drops of

water, the mist in the trees, or the taste of the food, the next time these people meet on the street they have a shared story.

Cooking fires are a strong tonic for introducing neighbourliness into parks. They hearten people and help them enjoy one another. The details of how this happens will vary utterly from one place to another, according to who makes the fires, who comes to them, and what they want to do. But here’s a warning: although, as a secondary effect, activities of this sort in public space will raise neighbourhood real estate values (I’m not kidding, ask our local real estate agents), cooking fires are as resistant as any other beautiful thing to being turned into a formula. They won’t work out for long if they’re used as a “community development tool,” with a certified cooking-fire specialist to teach people how to be neighbourly. Wherever that happens, the fires I’m talking about will sputter and die. Neither can a bake-oven be added into a park design as “a village concept,” as a planner proposed to me last year. He was thinking of a kitchen backdrop, put up like a movie set, near the playground, with an oven nearby. It sounded to me like a kind of Disney feature, to give people a warm feeling.

A German friend told me about a beautiful park in her city, which was lavishly redesigned about fifteen years ago. The plans called for an attractive old-fashioned bake-oven, stucco with a very nice ironwork door. It was built, and it stands unused to this day.

This booklet will not be helpful in devising such plans. It’s about the piecemeal, eccentric doings of ordinary people when they cook over fire in a park. What happens when people are not prevented from cooking and being together in this way, is as powerful as a law of physics. It can be midwife’d, but it can’t be planned.



PART ONE: PARK BARBECUES

The most common kind of cooking-fire in parks is in a hibachi or portable barbecue used at picnics. Usually these picnics involve an extended family or a circle of friends. When a house or apartment is too small to hold everyone, or when the weather makes the indoors too hot, park barbecues are a cheap alternative to meeting at a restaurant. If there are young children,

they can run around and make noise in a way that would be tough on the adults if the meal was indoors.

If the park is beautiful, with trees and flowers, plenty of picnic tables and interesting places to play, a meal there can celebrate the season and the fresh air, as well as the pleasure of being in good company.



Why should park staff encourage barbecue picnics?

Picnics provide a check on the park's well-being: The appearance of picnickers is an indicator of the health of a park in the same way as the appearance of fish is an indicator of the health of a stream. The better a park is doing, the more people will want to eat together there. If people aren't having picnics, a park needs fixing.

Barbecue picnics improve park safety: The more people decide to picnic together in a park, the safer and more interesting the park becomes. As much as the absence of picnickers is a sign of a park's ill health, when picnics return they can help to fix the problem, to lead to a vigorous recovery. This is especially true when picnics focus around a fire, made in whatever kind of barbecue the picnickers are able to bring

into the park. A barbecue means the meal will be *leisurely*. A barbecue means a day at the park, not the hurried eating of some packages of fast food on a park bench.

A barbecue picnic means more people in the park for longer.

Barbecues make the park more interesting: Barbecue picnics give other people just strolling by in the park a great chance to watch how families or groups of friends are with each other, how they play with their babies or argue and/or laugh together, what kind of food they cook and how they eat it. In that way, picnics provide a kind of impromptu public theater, with the park as the backdrop.

It's probably a grey area. A barbecue is not exactly an "open fire" (which *does* need a permit), although it can certainly spread a lot of smoke around.

Very few people apply for official permission before they have a park barbecue. For most people, the effort of arranging a get-together of their friends or their cousins and their aunts and uncles is strenuous enough without involving the bureaucrats six weeks in advance.

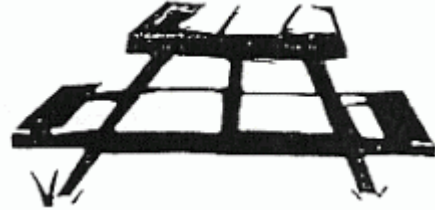
From the point of view of the authorities, requiring a permit for every barbecue is probably impossible. Picnics generally happen on weekends or on warm summer evenings, when most park staff have finished their work day. If a permit was required there would be few parks staff around to enforce it. And the police couldn't enforce it: often they don't even seem to have time to give tickets to people who are being loud and drinking alcohol in parks. So it's not very likely that they'd drive up over the park grass in their cruiser to write out a ticket for the Takahachis grilling corn on their hibachi, or the Da Silvas, cooking sardines and singing "Happy Birthday," or the Mackenzies, fixing hamburgers while an uncle plays the bagpipes.

So we'll conclude that using a hibachi or a portable barbecue in a public park, without notifying any official, is not breaking the law. The fact is, most people who run parks love to see people having a barbecue – a sign that people, in their rushed lives, still want to prepare a meal together, and take time to enjoy each other and enjoy the park.

Barbecues work better if the right stuff is in the park. Parks must have:

1. **Plenty of picnic tables** (in good repair, not wobbly, no protruding nails, no

sexually explicit or violent graffiti on them). The tables must be well distributed throughout the park.



2. **A water source within sight of the picnic table** (drinking fountain, usually), with a functioning on-off button and a stream high enough to fill a water bottle.



3. **Trash baskets** no more than thirty steps from the picnic table, preferably closer, and not full to the brim. Most people try to put their trash in baskets, but too often there are no trash baskets in sight.



What to do if the equipment is not there

If picnic tables, drinking fountains, or trash baskets are lacking, **call your local city councillor** and tell her/his assistant the problems. (You can get the number from the phone book or the municipal web-site.) Follow this up with an e-mail or letter itemizing the problems in writing and ask that this list be forwarded to the Parks Department person in charge of that specific park. Ask the councillor to let you know what the Parks department response was.

If the problems are not fixed in the park within two weeks, call the councillor's office back and ask why there's a delay.



If there is a good reason for the delay (for example, that four picnic tables are in the shop for repainting and will be returned tomorrow, or that the plumber has ordered a new part for the drinking fountain and will be installing it in two days), ask your city councillor for the phone number of the park supervisor and call her/him. Emphasize how glad you are that they are taking action and mention that there is a planned neighbour-

hood picnic in the park four days hence, when all the improvements will be fully appreciated by many concerned neighbours. If you want to give an additional little boost, mention that you are planning to invite the city councillor to this barbecue. Normally this news will help ensure the repaired items are delivered on or before schedule, rather than two months later.

If there is no good reason for the delay in the park improvements you requested, go to your park and get out your camera. Take some pictures, of exposed nails or broken sections in picnic tables or benches, of trash on the ground with no evidence of trash baskets (or overflowing trash baskets), of broken water-fountains, and of any other ugly or dangerous thing you happen to come across. When the pictures are developed, take a pair of scissors and cut off the empty bits in the pictures and fit all the remaining pieces into a nice little photo-collage. Such a collage can visually concentrate the problems you're talking about in a way that gets through to people.

Take this photo-collage to your neighbourhood cut-rate colour xerox place and get them to print about ten copies. Mail copies to

- the Park Department manager whose area includes your park (you can find out his/her name and address, and all other names you need, from your city councillor's office)

--the policy/planning director responsible for "park furniture," and

--the city councillor.



If you're feeling very pessimistic, you could also mail copies to the director of the Parks Department and to the urban correspondents at your city newspapers. In your cover letter, mention the date when you began to ask for these problems to be fixed, and also mention, at the bottom, who else got a copy of the collage.

Then take at least four of the remaining photo collages and post them at the park, with a little sign that says, "if you think we deserve better than this, please call your city councillor at _____." Point out these pictures to others in the park (have

some pieces of paper with the city councillor's phone number in your pocket, to hand out) when you're in the park

walking your dog or playing with your kid or checking to see if you can bring the family for a barbecue yet.

A "slum park picnic"

Up to this point all the park-fixing suggestions made here have actually been tried, with success. We never had to go the next step. But *if you still haven't got action within a week*, you could try something like this (just one idea, not tested):

Actually *have* the barbecue you threatened to have. Invite all your friends and put up signs in the park and the neighbourhood, also inviting any other park users to a potluck. Title the event something like "a slum park picnic." Emphasize that people should bring:

- bottled water, since your park is unable to provide a working drinking fountain
- their own chairs, since there are not enough picnic tables
- band-aids, disinfectant, and hammers, since the picnic tables that exist may have protruding nails
- a small spray can of paint, to cover over the graffiti
- garbage bags, since the city puts out insufficient trash bins.



Accompany your slum barbecue invitation to the city councillor with a nice package containing a bottle of water, the band-aids, the disinfectant, the hammer (you can ask for it back later), and a trash bag. If you like, you could also invite the Parks Department Director, with the same kind of accompanying gift bag.

Make some phone calls and spend some extra time in your park beforehand, to tell your neighbours that *this is an important chance for them to make a point and have some fun as well*. Chances are, if you pick your time well and give a week's notice, you'll get a good crowd. (If you know any clown or other children's performer who would be willing to come, advertise this on your invitation. If you're ambitious or inspired, also advertise "garbage bag races," "nail-hammering contests," "water-bottle-balancing dances," and other foolish fun.)

Whether you create a neighbourhood party that becomes an annual event — great fun just for being so peculiar — or you just get a small group of odd-sock neighbours who all bring day-old donuts for their potluck contribution, chances are the Parks Department will fix up your park's picnic facilities very soon. You'll have made so much fuss that it will be easier to address the problems than to continue to hear from you. So that would be one good outcome. The other is, doing this kind of in-your-face activism can give you a good chance to have a giggle. And if the officials who are getting your gift-packs have a sense of humour, it may be that they'll laugh too.

What to do if the trouble returns

Just because the problems you focused on get fixed doesn't mean they'll *stay* fixed. Sadly, there are very few Parks Departments that keep plenty of well-maintained picnic tables in thoughtful locations, backed up by enough frequently-emptied trash cans and well-functioning drinking fountains. People whose job is maintaining public space are often so distracted by their coffee-break schedule, or by their disagreements with their bosses, that they tend to fall back into doing the minimum, even when they started out well. On top of that there is often some resentment of the people one serves, even if the pay is decent and (for some) the work secure unto death.

Be that as it may, if you give people a nudge when things start to backslide in the

park, park workers will probably fix the problem again.

When you have to point out that the tables are getting scarce or in poor repair *again* (or whatever the problem may be) it's important to be polite and reasonable but not too friendly. Being friendly may take you in the direction of comfortable talk but not in the direction of action. It's also important, if you're sticking around your park over the long haul, to get to know a few higher-level people's phone numbers/ email addresses.



If park maintenance is shoddy and you get excuses but not action, don't be drawn into argument. Some people just prefer arguing to doing their job. They may even insult you, or else tell you with total sincerity that the simple things you're asking for are impossible. We've found that it's not usually helpful to try to persuade such persons. Go up a level, and up again if you still don't get results.



PART TWO: PARK CAMPFIRES:

The light and the warmth and smell of a campfire gather people in. A fire reminds people of when they were younger, perhaps of singing together and making music, or of telling campfire stories. A campfire is also one of the oldest ways to cook food. Almost everyone, no matter what country they were born in, seems to have a recollection of eating something delicious cooked over fire. People feel strongly about campfires. When we began to make campfires at our park, everything changed.

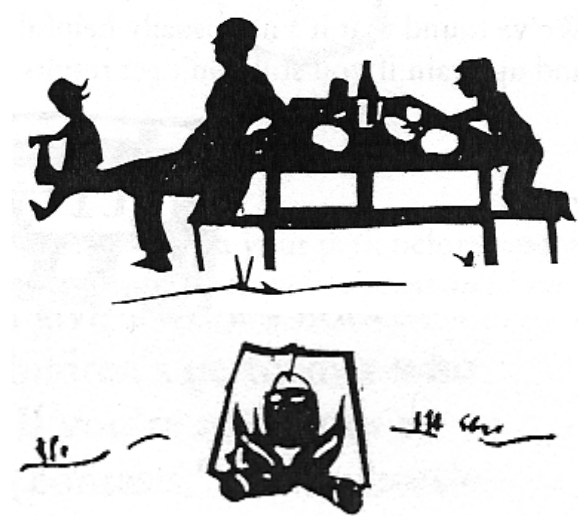
Why should park staff encourage campfires?

A campfire is such an old sign of human gathering that even today its power to signal community is undiminished. Wherever there is a campfire, one knows there are some people nearby. There also seems to be an ancient etiquette common to all cultures, that allows strangers to approach a fire. One can't come right into the circle but one can draw near. At our park campfires there is sometimes a whole second tier, an outer circle of passersby standing back a little way, just watching the fire for a while.

A campfire is less private than a picnic barbecue. For that reason, a campfire in a park is very suggestive of *what is possible* among strangers. It may be that most people living in cities treasure their privacy and their distance from one another, but for almost everyone that privacy sometimes feels like loneliness. For some people, the occasion of a campfire may make the awareness of bonds that have been lost more acute, for instance if the fire evokes memories of village life in a different country. But at the same time, many people, when they draw near a campfire, seem to feel that they can talk a little to the strangers near them, perhaps about some overlapping memories of other campfires. Even when there is no talk, but

rather, a reflective silence — people staring into the flames — the campfire seems to make a connection between those around it, although they may never have met before.

Because a campfire in an ordinary city park is so unusual, when people come across such a fire they are surprised, amazed. They may feel that *tonight*, in the dark, they've seen something worth thinking about. It reminds them that their park, and perhaps their city, is beautiful. It may even make them boast, the way the young guys who use the basketball court beside our park's fire circle boast: "nobody else has a park like this one, man, *nobody*."



Campfire Permits:

In our park we've had so many cooking fires that by now we have a year-long fire permit available on short notice to any "Friend of Dufferin Grove Park" (the park has lots of friends) who has received our fire training and made

arrangements with the park staff. If your park has no such family-friendly arrangement (yet), but you'd like to try having a campfire, you can apply for a permit yourself.

How to get a campfire permit in your neighbourhood park:

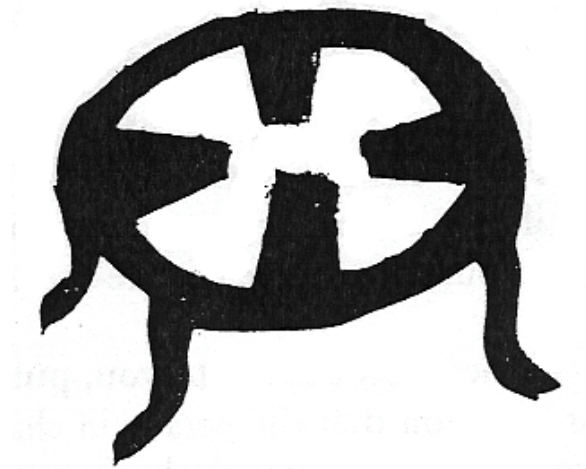
Make an appointment with the supervisor of your park (usually the "recreation supervisor" in charge of that area — get the phone number from your city councillor's office) and tell her or him what you're thinking about. If part of your reason for having the campfire is to enliven public space, you should say that. When you share the campfire cooking with some neighbours, *your request is converted from a private-use permit into a park-volunteer permit: a very important distinction.* If the supervisor agrees with your ideas about cooking in public space, ask her or him to help you get a campfire permit for the spot you've picked.

Who to apply to: You will have to contact the Permit Department (get the address from the park staff). Ask the recreation supervisor to give you a map of your park and mark the **x** for your proposed fire location, or sketch your own map. Write a letter to say you will have two buckets of water, two pails of sand, and a shovel. (No fire extinguisher is necessary.) Say there will be an official parks volunteer, trained by park staff, to attend to fire safety. Then fax your letter and the map to the city permit department. Put

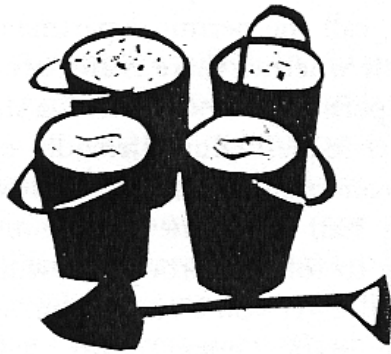
your phone number on your letter in case the permit department wants to confirm some things with you. You might like to ask for the permit on a couple of different dates in case the weather is bad or you want to try more than one campfire. More than one date can be on one permit. Make sure you give the recreation supervisor of your park copies of your map and your letter. That way the supervisor can keep an eye on the progress of your request.

Troubles: If you haven't had an acknowledgment of your letter after two weeks, call the permit department and find out whether there is any problem. A fire permit in a local park is a slightly unusual request. But a friendly call or two from you can help to show the permit staff that you are serious and willing to follow through. It will also, hopefully, get you a connection with a permit staff person who will be interested in shepherding your application along.

If you can't establish a connection, or if you get the feeling your application is not being actively considered, ask your recreation supervisor to call Permits and get the inside story.



Call your city councillor: Trying something new in your park will always be working against gravity, so you may have to find some extra support. A request for help from your city councillor can work well here. If you explain to the councillor's staff that you are trying to enliven your park and draw in others from the neighbourhood, they may be willing to call the permit department and let them know that the request has merit. It's good to keep your city councillor in touch with what's happening in public space anyway.



Campfire Safety:

When you get the permit, find a person to give you a lesson in park campfire safety. Although much fire safety is common sense, there are a few specifics. Sand is a safer way to put out a fire quickly than water, for instance (no steam). Water finishes the job and cools it down, so you should have two buckets of sand and two of water right beside the fire, and a shovel to move things around if necessary. In our experience it's best to build the fire on level ground, not dig a pit. That way there's no slope for anyone to stumble down toward the flames. For additional safety you might wish to erect a tripod over the fire. You might also consider having a blanket on hand in case you ever need to smother flames on a person.

In seven years of frequent cooking fires at Dufferin Grove Park, with between 5 and 25 people around each campfire, with school classes and day camps and people who don't speak each other's language, we have never had an accident. That's partly good fortune — unexpected things can happen — but also good attention to safety details.

— The main thing is to **locate the fire on level ground**, with ample room for people to keep a distance on all sides of the fire. There should be **no nearby obstruction** — a bush, a wall, a picnic table, a path — that requires people to walk too near the fire to get somewhere else.

— Because of its heat, fire carries its own natural incentives for people to stay back and have respect. Once in a long while you encounter a person who seems not to notice their position relative to the fire and gets dangerously close without appearing to be aware of it. **Point this out to them if they persist.** If they don't respond with greater awareness, or if they actually clown around or enlarge the fire or take out pieces of flaming wood, make sure they leave the fire-site at once.

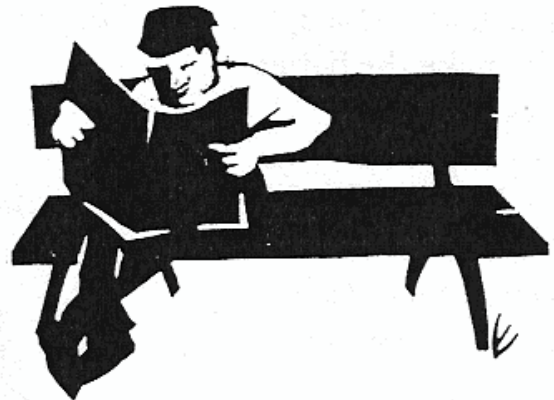
– **If they don't listen to you, put out the fire right then.** The permit is given on the assumption that the person in charge behaves responsibly. You have to be the boss of your campfire, since the buck stops with you.

Children's curiosity about fire: in our experience, children are very careful around fire, and also very curious. If you feel strongly that children must not be allowed near the fire, it's probably best to have the campfire without children present, or not to have the campfire at all. Otherwise it's too frustrating for the children. We've noticed that when we allowed very curious children to have long sticks which they could poke into the fire, they could experiment safely with us right there watching. They quickly learned what they wanted to know about combustion. Fire safety for children means allowing them to learn under the watchful attention of adults, not barring them from the fire site.

Volunteer campfire safety training: Check your fire safety plans with your recreation supervisor or their designated staff. They may give you some tips from their own experience (campfires or bonfires have been a staff-run activity at park/community festivals for many years). Once you've had your discussion (officially called a "volunteer training session") you should be covered by your park's volunteer insurance

clause. Then you're ready to settle the final details with the park staff. Get them to show you a water source and a sand source for your pails. If there's none available for you, you'll have to bring containers of water and sand from home: but every park has a source for both those things that you'll discover eventually.

Notifying the Fire Department: Then you can invite your friends and neighbours for the date on the permit. On that day, just before you're ready to light your fire, call the central fire department despatch number, and tell them you have a fire permit and that you're at such and such a place in your park (name the park and the intersection where it's located), and how long you expect the fire to continue. That way if a helpful neighbour, living near the park but unaware of your permit, sees smoke and calls the fire department, you won't be visited by three helpful fire trucks with sirens on. Bring along your permit form in case someone wants to see it.



Campfire recipes:

A lot of people use a campfire to cook hot dogs or toast marshmallows. If you want to go beyond that, you could try:

Bread on a stick
Corn roasted in the coals
Bread baked in the coals
Potatoes in the coals
Donuts
Apple fritters



From *Iroquois Uses of Maize and other Food Plants*, by A.C.Parker (1910):

— **Corn-cob in the husk, Wades’konduk o’nis’ta:** The embers from the camp or hearth fire were brushed aside and a row of unhusked ears laid in the hot stones or ground. These were then covered with cold ashes from the ash pit. Embers were now heaped over and a hot fire built and continued until the corn beneath was thought sufficiently baked. “Corn baked in this manner has a fine flavor and never becomes scorched.” (p.68)

— **Baked scraped corn, Ogo n sa’ ohon’sa’:** the corn is scraped from the cob, pounded in a mortar or mashed in a wooden bowl with a stone, patted into cakes, sprinkled with dry meal.....For baking in the ashes the cakes are wrapped in husk and covered with ashes. Embers are heaped over and a brisk fire built, this being kept going until the cakes were considered baked.....a British traveler.....says of this dish "better flavoured bread I never ate in this country." (Sometimes cooked cranberry beans or berries were mixed with corn before it was baked.)

Campfire apple fritters:

The batter is adapted from *The Joy of Cooking*.

To make the batter:

2 eggs, beaten

2/3 cup milk

1 tablespoon melted butter or sunflower seed oil

1 cup all-purpose flour

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon sugar.



Mix it well. The *Joy of Cooking* says, let the batter stand for 2 hours at least. Then beat the mixture again.

While your batter is resting, make a medium-size campfire, and tend it until you have a solid bed of glowing coals as a base. While you’re tending the fire, peel and core **twenty ripe but firm apples**, cut into ½ inch thick cross-sections. Have a bowl of sugar on hand for dipping the fritters.

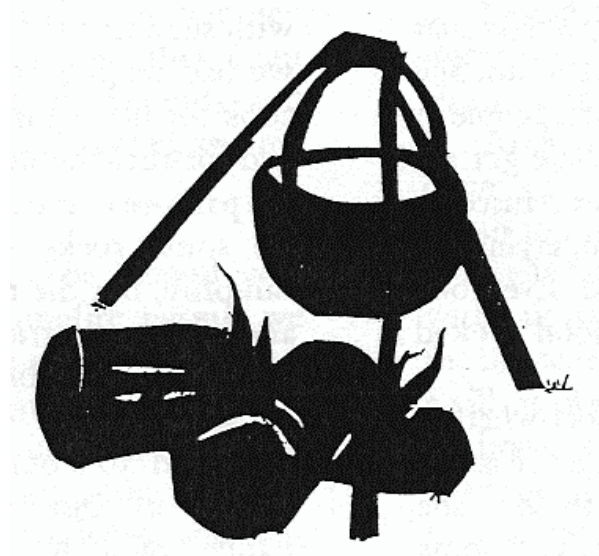
When the campfire is well established and the batter is two hours old, set up a **small table** or cooking platform by the fire. Put on this table: your **bowl of sugar**, your **apple sections**, a **colander lined with paper towel** for draining the apple fritters, your batter, a **slotted spoon**, a **pair of tongs**, and a pile of **paper napkins** weighed down with a **stone**, so they don't fly off in the wind. You can use the paper napkins for wiping your fingers from time to time. Have a trash basket nearby, for the used napkins.

Position a **fire stand** in the fire and put a cast-iron **dutch oven** on it, with about three inches of **vegetable oil**. When the oil is hot, test it with a small piece of apple-in-batter. If the apple rises quickly to the surface and foams, the oil is hot enough. Dip each apple slice into batter and drop it gently in the hot oil, being careful not to overcrowd the pot and thereby take the oil temperature down too much. Turn each slice once with the tongs and deep fry until it's golden on both sides. Remove with the slotted spoon and roll the slice in sugar, then wrap it in a napkin and pass it to the eager eaters who may be waiting.

Make sure you keep feeding the fire with small pieces of wood so the flames are hot enough to keep the oil hot. If the apple fritters begin to sink to the bottom, put more wood on the fire and cover the pot briefly with a lid (leave a slit open) until the oil gets hot enough again. (When the oil isn't hot enough, the apple fritters will cook, but they'll be very greasy.)

Apple fritters are most delicious in mid-winter. If you make them when there's snow on the ground, pick your fire location carefully. It should be on a slight hump, because any hollow will quickly fill up with melted snow from the fire, and if you're standing there making the fritters, you'll be standing in an icy puddle.

Deep-frying outdoors in winter is a very challenging way to learn to manage a fire. You begin to learn the meaning of "variables" — all the different factors, all inter-related, that affect the transformation of food through cooking: the outdoor temperature, the type of wood you're using, the kind of apples you have, what happens when it starts to snow. It's a very interesting activity, and so many people will tell you how delicious your food is that your head will spin (but your feet will be cold).



A permanent park campfire site:

If you come to feel that your park should have campfire site permanently, apply for a seasonal permit (usually one year at a time). You will need the support of the park staff, and you should make sure that the spot you ask for is as convenient as possible. You could figure out what was good about your campfire site when you had a single-occasion permit, and what could have been better. Was the spot you used awkward for some reason, or too distant from where you could park, or from the washrooms, or from a water source?

Equipment Were there enough benches for everyone to sit around the fire? Did the wood from your wood source burn well? Are there things the Park staff might make available at a permanent spot, such as a small storage box near the fire location, with a padlock, where wood and newspapers can be stored for community use? If you ask them nicely, it's amazing what helpful items Park staff can dredge up from their storage rooms. This is especially true if they become convinced that you are engaging in a neighbourly activity that will enliven your park.

In our park, we arranged for the Parks Department to bring some big logs and place them in a circle in the centre of the park: the fire circle. It's a permanent place for campfires, and nowadays one group or another books the fire circle a couple of times a month. We have a parks-department standard-issue shed where we keep barrels of scrap wood and split logs (harvest of the forestry department), a shovel and some pails. When someone wants to use the fire permit, they get the safety instructions and the key to the shed. When we ask the groups how long they plan for their fire to last, we add at least an hour to their estimate. People enjoy campfires so much they never want to go home.

Campfire Stories

Isabel: Our park's "cooking-fire lady," Isabel Perez, grew up cooking over a fire in Guatemala, and she used to miss that kind of cooking, living in Toronto. She once told us that when the first people in her neighbourhood back home got gas stoves, most of their families refused to eat the food cooked on them, saying the gas made the food taste bad. Everyone wanted to keep on eating food cooked over fire. When we asked Isabel whether she would try cooking over a fire at the park, she said she'd love to. But she wasn't used to it anymore, and some familiar arrangements were missing. Back home in Guatemala her father had built a clay fireplace in their courtyard, with support for a grill. But in our park we had no

fireplace. Isabel wanted to cook tortillas with the kids at the park, and for that she needed a level grill. In the park we first tried to balance the grill on some rocks stacked around the campfire, but the rocks were unsteady, and then we tried a semi-circle of firebricks but the bricks were very heavy to set up each time. One day we happened to come across a window display of cast-iron four-legged pot stands, built for



cooking-fires, at a hardware store in an Italian part of town. We bought a big stand, one foot high and two feet in diameter, for \$39.95. A week later we went back and bought a smaller stand, 8 inches by 16 inches, as well. That was the end of our troubles. Pots sat on the cast iron stands as steady as can be, or if we wanted, we laid a grill across the stand. Isabel made donuts with the camp kids in the summer, and tortillas, and dobladas, and pasta with sauce, in a big iron pot. A farmer named Krow came and did a corn roast. She brought a sack of corn picked a few hours before, and two chickens in a cage for the kids to see. They fed them corn until we thought the chickens might explode. (They didn't.)

In the spring and the fall we invited school classes, and they made hot chocolate and roasted marshmallows, and one winter we cooked french fries every Sunday over a fire beside the skating rink.

Sometimes when Isabel was cooking at the fire in the summertime, the smoke would curl slowly upwards through the trees and people going by would just stop in their tracks and stare. Cooking over a fire is a time warp. The cook moves more slowly and the food smells different. The sight of such a thing is surprising and disorienting for people walking through the park, and after they have stopped to take a look, they often walk away shaking their heads and smiling in a way that always pleases me very much.

A school visit: The second year after we got the campfire permit we began to let the nearby schools know they could book a park day with us and we would set them up with a fire and some food. One time soon after we started this, Margie Rutledge, who was in charge of the playground then, had booked two classes at the same time, on a Monday. It threatened rain all morning until just before the kids arrived, and then, as they

made their way from the bus stop across the park, it began to pour. We thought we should send them home. But when the classes – a little United Nations - got to the campfire area, the kids were excited, squealing and hugging each other as they took shelter under the half-in-leaf maples. We said to the teachers – you should probably just go back to the school. But they said, no, it's really warm today and there's no wind, and we'll have a good time anyway. Can we maybe put up your tarp? So we unfolded the giant blue tarp and ten or more kids helped stretch it out and tie it to the tree branches. They pulled the picnic tables underneath and set themselves up in their "kitchen," with the cooking fire steaming and sputtering nearby. The teachers lined up the kids with paper plates and one of them held a big black umbrella over Isabel while she dished up warm macaroni and sauce from the pot.

There was a grand banquet under the tarp, with the kids shouting loud, outrageous stories back and forth while they ate. The rain fell in sheets. Every few minutes one of the kids would poke a big branch upwards to raise the centre of the sagging tarp and a great fall of water would slide off the edge, with excited screams from everywhere.

After half an hour the rain slowed down to a light drizzle. A few groups began to break off into their own little umbrella-houses, six or seven umbrellas with a tipcloth stretched overtop. Soon the big central banquet was split up into a village of smaller "huts," with some of the braver kids leaving shelter altogether, to try out the stilts or dig a river-channel in the sand pit.

By the time the rain stopped, fort-building was in progress in the sand pit, with a bridge over the river channel and a stone-reinforced embankment for a castle that only girls were allowed to go into. The staff and the teachers built the fire back up, so that it would be warm for the kids who were wet.

The fire was the centre of this scene, with kids going out to build and to play and then coming back again to get warm.

By the end of the afternoon, when the two classes left, Margie and I thought we should present medals to those teachers, real gold medals with shovels and fire and stilts engraved on them, for being so kind and adventuresome with their students. What a day that was.

The rink campfire: When we first started to try making the rink a bit more civilized, I used to come down on Sundays and make a campfire, beside the rink. Sometimes Fabio and Jennifer, aged 11 and 13, and I made chicken soup, cutting up the chicken and the vegetables at a picnic table beside the fire. We'd sell styrofoam cups of soup right from the fire, and we'd have a pot of hot chocolate simmering there too. Skaters would come over and sit on the benches and warm their hands on their soup cup or their hot chocolate cup. Even when I had two fire helpers, there were a few times when I felt a little overwhelmed. People would come over to the fire and they would want to talk, which was the original point of doing this fire – neighbourliness. The problem was, they didn't only want to talk to each other, they also wanted to talk to me, and I was trying to concentrate on keeping the food clean and the fire burning. Sometimes I used to get a little short with people, and afterwards I felt sorry.

One Sunday a man came over with his three children and sat by the campfire, and I noticed his right hand had no fingers. The stump looked swollen, dark red. He saw me looking. He said, "next week it will be one year since I lost my fingers." He said he worked in a tool and die factory and he'd been trying to fix his stamping machine. It was stuck. Suddenly it came unstuck and came down on his hand. As he told me this I could see he was back there again and the

machine was coming down again. He told me that he now has terrible phantom pain. They had told him at the clinic that the pain would get better after six months. But it had got even worse.

His wife came over. She wore a sari under her winter jacket. I had never met her (or anyone in this family) before, but she, like her husband, seemed to have no desire to hide their situation. She watched him as he poked at the campfire with his other hand, and said, "he suffers all the time." And, indeed, he sat there suffering, getting his children some soup, talking to them, and suffering in the intervals, his shoulders hunched.

The campfire was his rightful forum, where he could find witnesses for his suffering, and for his bravery. This is another ancient reason for campfires.

The basketball campfire: Sam, the basketball player, approached me to ask if he and the other regulars from the basketball court could have a campfire one evening. I got him two pails of water and a shovel and showed him the wood supply, and gave him a talk about his responsibilities. He said, "no problem."

Later that evening I went over to the fire circle and saw they had set up a grill and were making hot dogs. There was some beer but it didn't look bad, and the lot of them, about a dozen, looked so pleased, both with the fire and with themselves, that I left quickly, not wanting to intrude in their club. The next morning we saw that the fire site was tidy and the pails and shovels had been neatly propped next to the rink house door.

In the week after that, Sam came almost every day, saying they were going to barbecue some chicken that evening, or maybe try baking pizza dough on a stick. The scene by the campfire was a little louder as the week went on, but very friendly, with maybe fifteen people most evenings. By

eleven at night there would be only a small group left, staring into the glowing coals. One night I could hear the group singing, and drumming with sticks on the park bench. When they saw me coming toward them, they free-styled some complimentary verses about fire and parks and ovens. Very graceful. Then on the weekend they had a fire in the afternoon, but when I went to check later, all the youth had left. Two older homeless men who store their stuff in the park compost bin had taken their places, and they were grilling sausages with three other homeless-looking guys I had never seen before. I saw some bottles in brown paper bags, but nothing seemed out of hand, and this group, too, looked very pleased with themselves. They seemed to me like gypsies, free under the sky, lacking nothing. They urged me to have a sausage, but I was too squeamish and said I had to go back home.

In the days that followed, Sam said he was getting tired of being in charge of the campfire every evening, and he brought his friend Gerry over as his alternate, but then Gerry said he didn't want to stay all the time either. I said, I only trust a few of you to be in charge, I don't even know some of these guys. So Gerry said he'd stay, because the others were all pressuring him.

Late one evening, though, I found neither Sam nor Gerry there. There was a fire, though, and the half dozen youth sitting around it must have run out of wood part way through the evening. They were burning a piece of one of the park's homemade checker tables. I made them put the fire out and gave them a sharp lecture. They looked at me but didn't say anything.

Next morning, a bleary-eyed Sam was waiting for Lily at the door of the rink house when she arrived for work. Sam asked her for wood to cook breakfast. They intended to make steak and eggs. It turned out that when Sam returned the previous evening they had resurrected the fire and stayed in

the park all night, drinking beer and burning up most of a park bench to keep warm.

That put them all in the dog house, and we didn't let them have any more campfires.

But they did have a really good time at the beginning.

The beating: A group of five families were having a campfire on the Sunday of Labour Day Weekend. At about 9.30 a fight broke out near the basketball court, and it turned into a group attack by 6-10 guys who kicked one person repeatedly about the head and chest. When the families at the fire circle realized what was happening, they yelled at these guys to stop. Some left the park then, but three of the attackers continued with the kicking. Because there were so many people in the campfire group, some of them got up the nerve to run over. That finally made everyone else leave. But the fellow who was being kicked wasn't moving – he was unconscious. They called 911 and gave him first aid. Then the ambulance came, and he was just coming around when they took him away.

The families put out the campfire and left too. They told us the next day that seeing this terrible beating was revolting, and also they were really worried about the effect on their kids. But I said they shouldn't underestimate the positive effect on their children. How many children get to see for themselves that their parents are brave and help out people in danger, instead of turning away? They said they guessed that was true.

Thank God all those families were in the park with the campfire. Who knows how that fellow would have ended up otherwise.

Hallowe'en: Children from the Hawthorne-on-Essex Daycare Centre, and their parents, held a Hallowe'en Fundraiser. I went over to check on them after dark. They had made a big campfire in the fire circle, and there were sheet ghosts flapping in the trees. The park is usually pretty empty

at this point in the year, but not that night. There were children everywhere, playing games in the dark and rolling down the hills and jumping out at each other from behind the trees. A lot of the parents had dressed up. I asked the kids what they were eating, and they told me: *haunted hot dogs* and *terrible treats* (popcorn stuffed into see-through latex gloves with jellybean fingernails), and drinking *eerie drinks* (mulled cider). There was a storyteller off to one side of the fire, telling a ghost story to a group of big-eyed kids, all of them very quiet. Charlotte, who organized this campfire, told me that the kids had such a wonderful time that everyone wants to make this event a yearly happening. And she said they raised \$380 for new toys for their daycare.

Chestnuts: A woman named Anna told me this: “At our campfire in the park last Saturday, it was already pretty cold out. When I came into the rink house with my little boy a few days later, the staff asked me if we all froze. But we didn’t. We made a big fire and kept warm.

“We roasted my parents’ homemade Italian sausages and a kind of hard homemade cheese that doesn’t really have a name. We also roasted chestnuts, by making a slit in each nut and shaking them over the

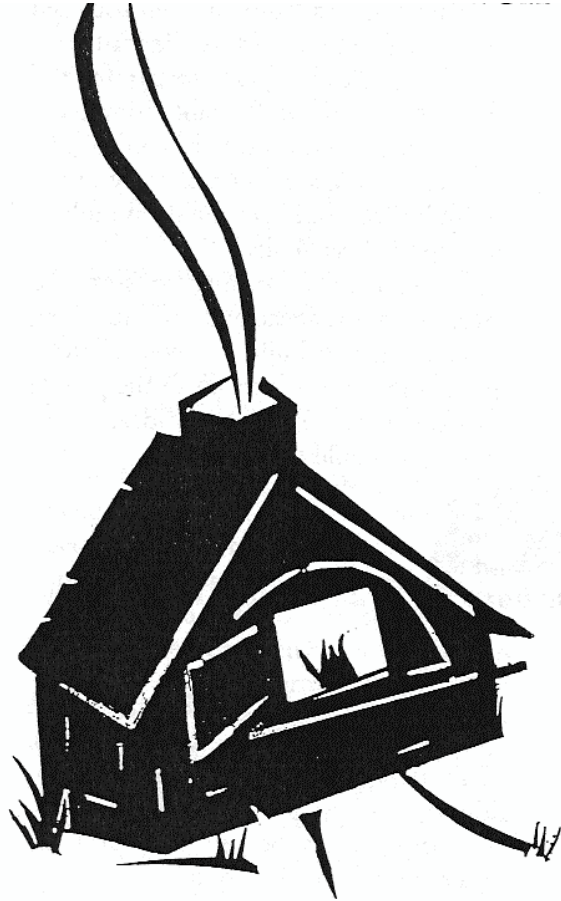
fire in an old frying pan. It worked okay, although my parents said it would have been better if we’d had a pan with holes in it, like people use back home for roasting chestnuts.

“Some kids we didn’t know came over from the playground and we gave them some nuts. There was so much food, it was no problem sharing it.

“My parents had told me beforehand that a campfire at this time of year was silly. But at the park (there were twelve of us there), my parents started telling us about when they were young and still lived in Sicily. They used to go out to other farms to pick olives and if the weather turned bad, they’d make a fire and roast some food, and then go home without picking any olives, but with a full stomach. Now here they were again so many years later, cooking food over a campfire on a cold day in Canada, with their children and grandchildren. We had a really good time.”



PART THREE: A WOOD-FIRED COMMUNITY BRICK OVEN IN THE PARK



The sight of a crumbling village oven, in a documentary film about Portugal, started our bread oven idea here at Dufferin Grove Park. The film showed the village priest encouraging the people to repair their old communal oven, and then there was a short clip of some village women baking at the rebuilt oven, their faces lit up by the fire. When I described this movie scene to people at the park, their faces lit up too. Over the following weeks I was astonished at the strength of people's reaction to the oven story, as I was asked to tell it again and again. Of all the ideas ever proposed for the park, there has never been such a uniformly enthusiastic response. There must be an old

memory (of bread baked on the hearth with fire) that people don't seem to have let go of, even after half a century or more of sliced bread in plastic bags.

Many older people still remember outdoor brick ovens from the countries they came from, Portugal or Trinidad or Italy or Guyana or France or almost anywhere. In Quebec there is a small outdoor-oven revival because it's one way to keep traditional Quebec cooking alive. But in most parts of



the world, the old communal bread ovens are falling into disrepair or are already gone. At the same time, restaurants all over North America have begun to offer pizza and many other dishes cooked on the hearth of a brick oven right in the restaurant. People like it, but often times this food is expensive, because it's slow food, not fast food, prepared by the hands of cooks rather than by fabulous machines that can turn out a thousand assembly-line "food products" in under an hour.

In Italy there is a "slow food movement" with over 60,000 members. Its goal is to steer another course, an alternative course to the fabulous machines, by backing the small producer, the human-scale farmer, the small local markets, the one-of-a-kind cheese maker and so on. In a sense it's a movement to return slow food to neighbourhoods as well as to restaurants.

Wood-fired bread ovens built for communal use are certainly one way to bring slow, excellent bread back. But we didn't know anything about this movement in 1995, when we resolved to build an oven. We didn't even exactly "resolve" — it would be more accurate to say we put out feelers to see if anything would stop an oven, and nothing did. The building inspectors said the oven was too small to come under their inspection. The park supervisor said he didn't see anything wrong with our oven plans, and then he went away on holidays. The funding people who had given us a "child nutrition grant," meant to open up new healthy food possibilities in our neighbourhood, said that fresh bread

from an oven sounded nutritious to them. So we were allowed to use some of the grant to pay for the oven. A friendly and capable contractor in the neighbourhood looked at our plans and said, sure, he was busy in the week but he could get the oven built in a couple of weekends.

So with nothing to stop the oven, we went ahead and built it. Now, if you want to build an oven in your park, and want to explain to the people in charge why it's a good idea, here's what you could tell them.



Why should park staff encourage the building of an outdoor community oven?

An oven is a story magnet. People rarely pass by the park oven when something is baking without stopping to talk. Ovens like ours were used in Portugal, Italy, Poland, Trinidad, Germany, Greece, Spain, Guyana, rural Canada. Different kinds of ovens, also involving wood fire, were used almost everywhere else. Because ovens were so common and so much a centre of communal activity, many people have been told family stories about what was cooked in them, and they recognize the oven as something familiar.

At the same time, because communal ovens later became scarce, almost lost, seeing such an oven is always a shock for people. This means that the natural inhibitions of strangers about speaking to one another are overcome by the natural desire to tell what one knows about this

surprising object. Such stories have to do with recollections of smell and taste and physical movement, and tend to be accompanied by large, lively gestures. This attracts other people walking by. There is a lot of enthusiastic interruption, as people pile on layer after layer of description:

"This is how my grandmother tested for temperature..."

"This is how my mother marked her loaves so she could tell them apart from her neighbours' loaves after they were finished baking....."

"This is how the plum cakes smelled when they were carried home through the streets after baking...."

"This is how we opened the oven to get out the stew at the end of the Sabbath...."

"When we were children we had to gather kindling from this certain wood....."

A public oven that gives such a strong push for strangers to share overlapping stories is a very good thing, in a city where so many people know so little about one another's stories, past or present.

An oven attracts festivals and community events. This only makes sense. People want to share food on special occasions. If we had built substantial stone barbecues instead of an oven, the festivals would still have come. But an oven is more sheltered from the elements, and in winter we can bake bread and make pizza even when it snows.

We don't have to put on the festivals ourselves. People call up and say:

....six folk-dancing groups get together once a year and there are too many people for a small hall — could they come and dance outdoors and bring a potluck to augment our bread and pizza?

....A theater company has devised an open-air park performance about the mythology surrounding baking in ancient times, could they get us to bake some bread for opening night?

....A community Hallowe'en parade needs a destination for the parade to end at — could they end at the park around a giant bonfire, with fresh bread for the participants?

....The local city councillor's office wants to host an all-neighbourhood lawn sale, could they put it near the oven and have some pizza available?

The smaller events come even more easily. A nursery school wants to do its annual fundraiser, a daycare wants a picnic of all the parents and kids, a street festival will culminate in a pizza-potluck at the park, a group of friends wants to bake unleavened bread before passover, a city parks tour wants to stop and have lunch at the oven. Even birthday parties, if screened, are a kind of community get-together, with familiar faces as friends from school and, often, their

parents, gather around the pizza-making table.

And that's not even counting the school classes which want to make pizza at the park, as part of their play day, or part of a lesson on wheat. There are weeks in the spring when there are school outings to the Dufferin Park oven twice a day every weekday. Some of the children tell us they've never been to the park before, even if they live three blocks away. So the oven brings them into the park. They often say they'll come back with their parents, and sometimes they do.

The programs we do offer ourselves around the oven are also proof of the strong desire people have to eat together. Once or twice a week it's an open oven, when anyone can come and buy a lump of dough and some tomato sauce and cheese, bring their own toppings and make lunch. Often there are seventy or eighty parents and young children coming to make their lunch. Getting your lunch like this takes much longer than ordering a slice from the pizza place up the street. But people tell us speed is not the point. Perhaps they've come to meet their former prenatal class here, all of them now with six-month-old babies, and they're all spread out on three big blankets. Or they've just arranged to meet one friend and spend an afternoon off work in the sunshine, talking and watching the children run around the park. Or they've come on their own, new in the neighbourhood, hoping to meet some of their neighbours.

Any way you look at it, an oven brings people into a park. Build it and they will come.



How to build an oven in a park.

Building a communal oven is neither easy nor terribly hard to do. But before I describe how it can be done, I have several cautions.

1. A Bread Caution: Baking bread is not a *virtual* activity in any sense. It's a very physical activity spread out over real time. Making bread slowly (less yeast, slower rise), which tastes better, is an activity spread out over quite a bit of real time. Making a fire increases the time. It also means there's smoke, splinters, soot, and heat. All senses become involved, intensely. In addition to that, baking or cooking with fire in a park draws other people, always. They almost always want to tell you a story of older ways of cooking food where they come from. Hearing stories from your neighbours or from strangers takes *more* time. This means that a community bake-oven runs on a different time (an older kind of time) than most people's watches, or schedules, do. If you want to live in a slower time a few days a month, this is a wonderful way to do it. If you love good bread but you have to keep moving *fast*, a visit to a good bakery will be more satisfying. Don't try to bake in a wood-fired bake oven, at least not until your life enters a different season.

2. A Pizza Caution: If your motive for putting a community bake-oven in your park is mainly to make pizza for neighbourly events, school visits, day camps, etc., this will need paid staffing. At Dufferin Grove Park, we found that so many groups wanted to use the oven for pizza, during their outing to the park, that we built a second, smaller oven to accommodate bread baking. When school groups came, the children seemed to delight in rolling out the dough, putting together their own toppings, and seeing their pizza bake, bubbling up before their eyes and finished in three minutes. The kids had so much fun, and so did the grown-ups at neighbourhood events. But it's hard work to set up, supervise, and clean up after big groups — far too much work, over time, for an unpaid volunteer. The most logical way to handle this work is assign it to a park staff person who does other things as well but who can concentrate on pizza when a group wants to use the oven. You will have to persuade your local recreation supervisor, or higher powers, that community-building through a wood-fired bake-oven is logically part of the park staff's mandate. If you find this effort of persuasion too daunting, think again about putting effort into the building of an oven.

If, despite (or even because of) these two cautions, you decide you want to put a community wood-fired oven into your park, here is a way to proceed.

Finding the spot Everything begins with a walk, or several walks. Walk around your park, maybe with a few friends, and see if there's a place that seems right for an oven. Is there a water source? Is there a storage area? Is there shelter nearby? Is the location near a commonly used area, not out-of-the-way or dangerous? Is there room to plant a small kitchen garden near the oven, to

supply herbs and some vegetables for roasting? Is there by any chance an existing slab of concrete to build the oven on?

Finding the wood source Can you think of a local wood source? Is there a carpentry shop in the neighbourhood that will give you their scraps, or a lumberyard, or a factory that gets deliveries on skids which they then discard? (Skid wood is good because it's

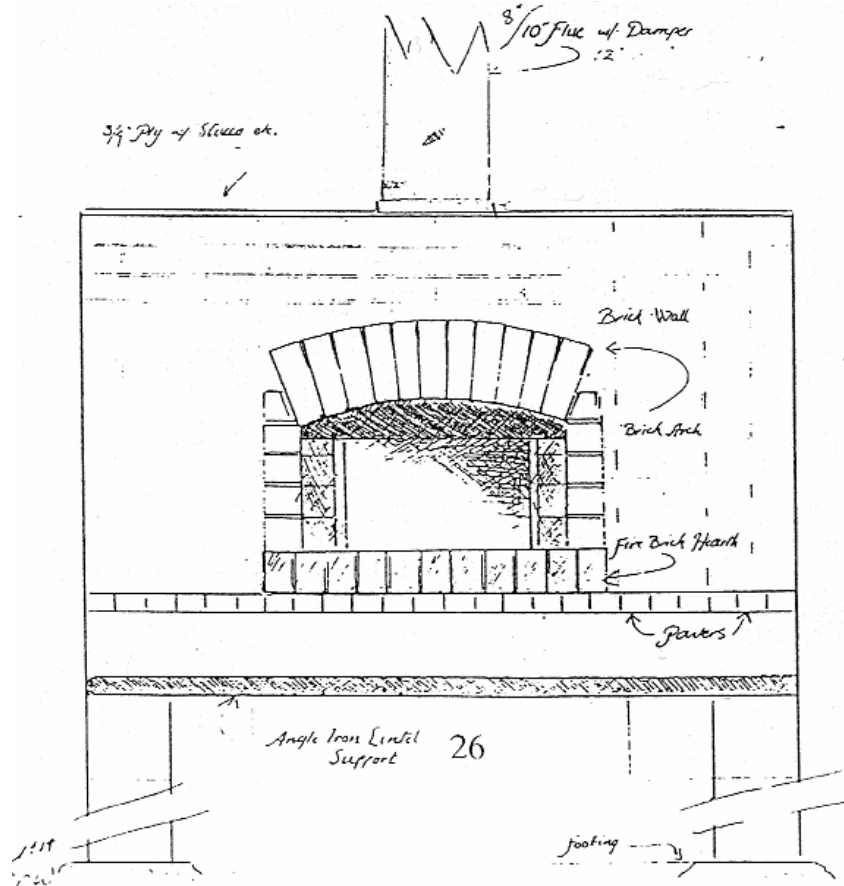
often hardwood, which burns hotter.) Would they deliver the wood to the park? (People often will, because it costs money to send wood to the dump, and in any case, a lot of people hate putting wood in the trash.) Where could you store the wood?

Getting people's blessings Once you've thought about these things, consult with friends, or with people you talk to at the park. If you feel that an oven could find a home at your park, then it's time to go and visit the recreation supervisor attached to that park. If he or she likes the idea, contact your councillor just to feel her or him out on it.

If you get a good reaction (this is important), ask the councillor and the park supervisor for names of other groups or people who might be interested (e.g. an immigrant women's group, local schoolteachers, daycare programs, people who have been active in the park, church ministers who do outreach, etc.).

Write a short description of the proposed oven and fax it or send it to these groups or people. A week later, call and ask if they like the idea. (If you feel shy about this, don't worry; people are often very interested when you talk about such an oven.) Do they want to support you with a call to the councillor or a letter? If you find a person who says they're *really* interested, invite them to meet you at the park and walk around and talk. Face-to-face is always friendlier, and discussing something enjoyable like an oven is a very nice way to get to know a new person.

It would be good if this round of calls would yield a dozen letters of enthusiasm, because if you find enough support to get your oven-building approval from the parks department, your next hurdle will be to find the money to build the oven. Most funders would like to see letters of support, to show that others in your community intend to use the oven. Nobody wants to waste money funding a white elephant.



COST:

How much it will cost to build a 20-loaf oven:

Alan Scott, of **Ovencrafters**, sells very good oven plans. His design for a mid-sized oven that can hold 20 loaves of bread or cook five pizzas at once, costs about \$100 (American dollars). You can find out more about Alan's ovens by calling him in Point Reyes, California at 415-663-9010 or by e-mailing him:

ovencraft@nbn.com
<<mailto:ovencraft@nbn.com>.When>.

Or you can get *The Bread Builders*, by Daniel Wing and Alan Scott (Chelsea Green, 1999). Also, the Masonry Heater Association's web site "Brick Bread Oven Page" is full of interest. When we used Scott's plans, the costs were:

1. Cement, blocks, bricks (including good firebricks), insulation, and the other supporting construction materials for the working parts of this oven (the domed housing for the fire): \$2000.

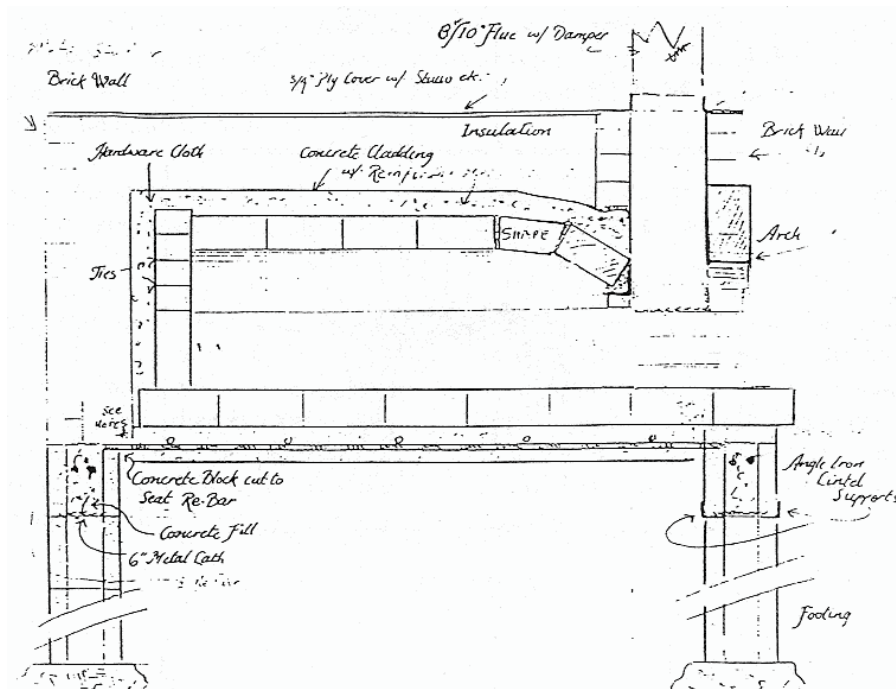
2. The labour of laying the concrete platform, building a concrete-block base to raise the oven to waist-height (i.e. comfortable working height for the bakers): about \$600.

3. The labour cost of building the actual oven (this needs a skillful bricklayer/mason): about \$1200.

4. The materials-and-labour cost of building the housing (walls and roof) for the oven after the dome is finished, and filling it with insulation, doing the chimney and the flashing etc.: between \$1200 and \$1600, depending on what you use as the covering materials, i.e. bricks, or boards, or stucco, or stone.

Total cost of the oven: between \$5000 and \$5400

This cost can be lessened by getting donated materials or donated handyman labour from within your community. But be careful about your workers: not getting skilled workers to build the main part of the oven may be a false economy.



How to get money to build the oven:

\$5000 is a small amount of money to pay for a pretty ingenious way to enliven a park. What you need is to find a charitable foundation that can see the possibilities. Foundations that have any kind of "community-building" or "neighbourhood-strengthening" as their mandate are good to approach.

The tricky part about foundations:

Foundations have money, and whoever has money calls the tune. There are a variety of foundation tunes, some friendly, some distinctly off key. It's probably good to avoid foundations that make you twist your application into an overly specific set of guidelines or an overly grand definition of what you're trying to do. Some foundations have so many stipulations and such a lofty view of what constitutes social change that you wonder why they bother inviting funding applications at all: they so obviously know exactly how to save the world already. But here and there you'll find a smaller, more approachable foundation, or an unusually flexible pilot program in a big foundation, designed not only for sophisticated agency fund-raisers but also for amateurs, like (perhaps) you.

You need to get together some park friends ("Friends of ____ Park"). You are now a group, and if you want to be fancy you can designate officers, or even vote for them. (The more seriously you take the task of organizing yourselves, the less time you will have to attend to getting the oven built. "Friends" suggests a loosely structured model, basically just people who like and trust one another enough to do what they set out to do.) Write the promising foundation a short letter, maybe with a few photos, describing the oven and how it might enliven your neighbourhood, and giving the exact cost. Follow it up with one phone call (*no* usually means no), and then if they let

you apply officially, fill out their application, send in all your letters of support, and ask to meet with someone there to answer questions or explain.

Be brief and write your points in point-form "bullets":

Long explanations giving your innermost thoughts on why you want to do this don't work. Your request either fits what the foundation wants or it doesn't. In the larger foundations, your request will be processed the same way as in most bureaucracies — by people who have far too much paperwork and want their reading pre-digested in the form of "bullets." If you fill out their form succinctly and your request fits, one day you may have a cheque in the mail.

How to receive a donation:

Chances are, if you are really just trying to get an oven built in your park, you won't be a registered charity, and most foundations only pay out money when there is a charitable registration number. In our case, we asked our local office of the Catholic Children's Aid Society (a registered charity) if they would accept money on our behalf. They did this gladly because, as their director said, anything that makes life more nourishing for families in the neighbourhood will help reduce their client load. So then we asked the foundation to send the cheque to Children's Aid and the Children's Aid's accounting department re-issued a cheque to us.

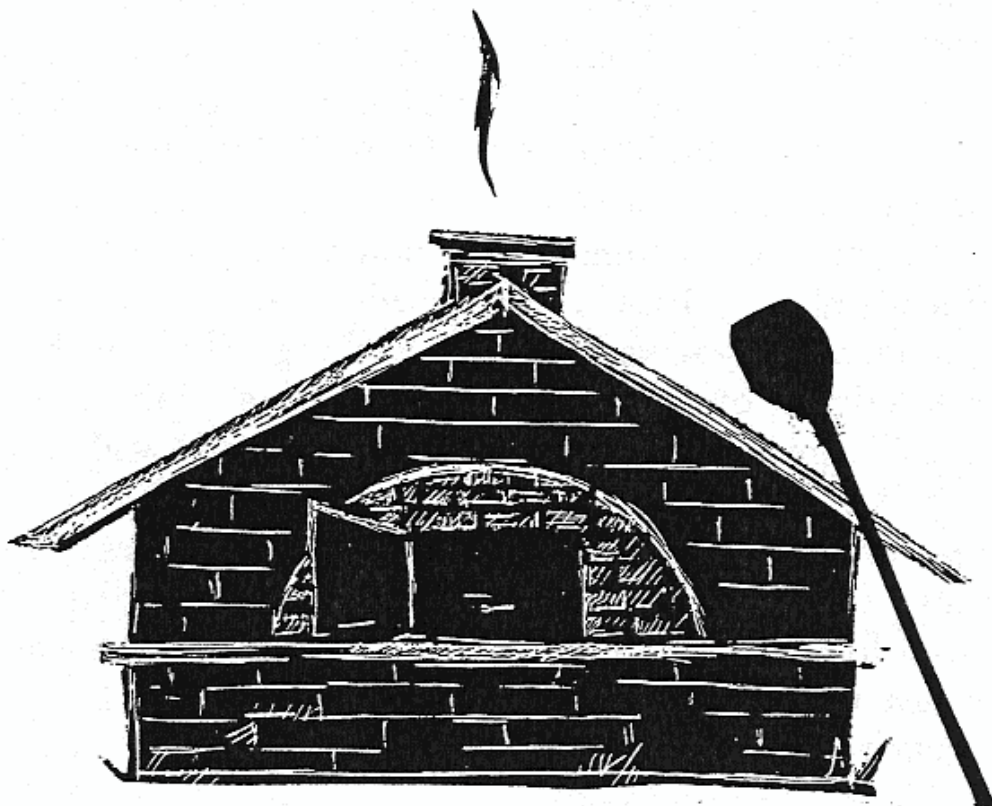
If you can't find a foundation to pay for

the oven: You could ask 50 people to pay

\$100 each. Good luck, but maybe.....? Or you could find out whether anyone in the neighbourhood works for a company that makes donations occasionally, and if they would approach that company with the oven proposal. Or you could have 62 bake sales (no! no!). Or you could **ask five people**. If you're lucky, one of them will know an affluent person who wants to help out somewhere, in some way. Or if the five people don't know such a person but they like your idea, maybe they'll each ask five other persons who might in turn know one person who can give your park the money you need.

The money will turn up. If the only thing that's holding up your oven is an absence of money to pay for it, the money will come. This is a strange fact, but probably true. And while you're

waiting, you'll learn some interesting things, things you maybe didn't know, about how the world works. Getting an oven built, just as I said earlier about baking bread, is not a *virtual* activity in any way. You will become involved in a small continuous drama of finding out which of the people drawn in by your project have something substantial (I don't just mean money) to bring with them. Many won't bring much to the project. They will imagine that wishing will make the oven, but it won't. What's left after the wishing-people have moved on to their next wish? That's the interesting part, the small suspenseful drama. Enjoy it and meanwhile, remember to open up a group bank account at your local bank. (Ask the bank to waive service charges on your group's account, because they should be supporting citizen initiatives in their neighbourhood.)



What to do when you have the money to get started:

Stake-outs: Assuming you have settled the spot where the oven will stand, call the utility companies (telephone, hydro, gas, water) to arrange for a stake-out of the site. This is because the oven needs a foundation of gravel, about 15 inches deep, and when anyone digs a hole in a city they have to know for certain that they won't hit any wires or pipes. When the stake-out people come they will give you some maps of your site with any possible pipes/ wires marked and **an official "clearance" number**. Keep these papers in your file. You must get moving on your construction soon after the clearances because they expire in a month.

Workers

While you wait for the stake-out, look around for your builders. You need:

-two labourers to dig a 15-inch-deep hole about four inches wider and longer than the oven platform's "footprint" and fill it level with gravel;

-two skilled workers to make a level platform of reinforced concrete on top of the gravel surface;

-a bricklayer to lay a box of concrete block, nice and level, up to almost waist height (usually four blocks high);

-a skilled worker back again to put a level platform of reinforced concrete on the second layer;

-a skilled bricklayer to build the hearth, the dome, the concrete surround, the chimney, and the oven door (in other words, the oven's working parts);

-a carpenter to build a housing around the oven (after it has "cured" for 2-3 weeks, depending on the weather): that means wooden walls, unless you opt for brick, and a roof built in such a way that the empty spaces beside the oven and under the roof can be packed with fire-proof insulation;

-it's very nice to have a few **handy, interested enthusiasts** from the neighbourhood to be the helpers for these skilled workers.

Not everyone makes a good helper — a cautionary tale.

A youth "gang" called the "L.A.'s" used to hang around a park near ours, around the time when we were ready to build our first outdoor oven. Five of the more ambitious (or broke) gangsters had some work with us at Dufferin Grove Park from time to time, digging flower beds and helping Isabel with the cooking fire. I thought we should hire them as labourers to work with Nigel Dean, our oven contractor — we'd provide good work experience for these fellows and at the same time we'd get some extra help for our oven project. The city had given us a small grant meant for rescuing troubled youth, and so for \$10 an hour we set these young fellows to digging the foundation hole and filling in the gravel. Then Nigel, the contractor, got them to help him start building the oven. The more tricky the work got, the more our five workers rebelled at taking orders. Nigel was actually a pretty cool guy, a drummer in a band when he wasn't a contractor, and he was a cheerful boss, but he knew what had to be done and how to do it, and our workers didn't want to go along. They wanted to dream out loud about how they intended to set up as independent contractors right after they finished this job. They wanted to have lots of smoke breaks. They wanted to argue with Nigel about what should be done next. They wanted to rest when the cement was freshly made in the mixer and ready to pour. When Nigel insisted that they come and help him NOW, they threatened to beat him up. That was, of course, the end of their career with us.

About using volunteers: When we built our first oven, we thought we might get help from some of the retired Calabrian men who played cards at the park every day. Several of them were experienced bricklayers. The first thing we found out was that none of the old men had the slightest intention of giving their labour for free, and most of them weren't interested in building the oven for money either. The point of retirement was that their days of labouring were over, and finally they could play cards and talk or shout all afternoon, every day of the week. That kind of paradise did not include temporarily going back to their former trade. Those few who were willing to work for money couldn't speak English and we couldn't find out about their credentials. (Their friends implied that they might not be very competent, a conviction that seemed to be mutual among many of these old card cronies.)

About city or union labour rules: In the end it seemed that the best thing was to hire an active contractor, whose work was known to some of us, who lived in the neighbourhood and was interested in our small project. He sub-contracted the bricklayer and did the rest of the work himself. After we fired the gangsters, we got him one young assistant (a local youth, unemployed at that time but handy and cooperative) as a labourer, whom we also paid.

Before we started building, we had asked for an oven cost quote from the municipal building department. That quote came in at exactly twice the cost of building the oven with our contractor. Every motion of the city workers would have been counted. The contractor had more leeway. Since his labourer was a youth who was learning on the job, an unofficial apprentice, his wages were half those of a city labourer.

Also our contractor was a local resident who was committed to the oven project as a good thing for our neighbourhood, so he gave us a bit more time than he charged for. And the final consideration was that the city would have put us at the bottom of a long list of pending projects, whereas our contractor was able to fit us in sooner.

Were we breaking the City of Toronto labour rules? It's hard to say. Our project was small and unusual, so it probably wasn't seen as a precedent for other incursions. The contractor was known to us, committed to the project, and giving us a bit of his time free. This seemed to allow the city workers to consider him as a volunteer rather than an outside hire. The fact that the oven-building was mainly on weekends and evenings, outside of regular park workers' hours (most Park staff work five days a week from 7-3) also helped — nobody got in each other's way, or even had to look at each other.

Probably in the end an outdoor community bread oven in a public park is too small to prompt a union grievance. Many of the city's unionized workers are either very busy with bigger things, or very tired of working and mostly thinking about when they can go home, or very cynical about bureaucracy and secretly (or openly) happy to see something unusual, something unorthodox, in a park. In gratitude for their acceptance of our project's irregularities, we always make sure to offer any passing park worker bread or pizza when the oven is going. They like to see how it works. Curiosity trumps strict regulation, when the stakes are not too high.



Building regulations and fire regulations:

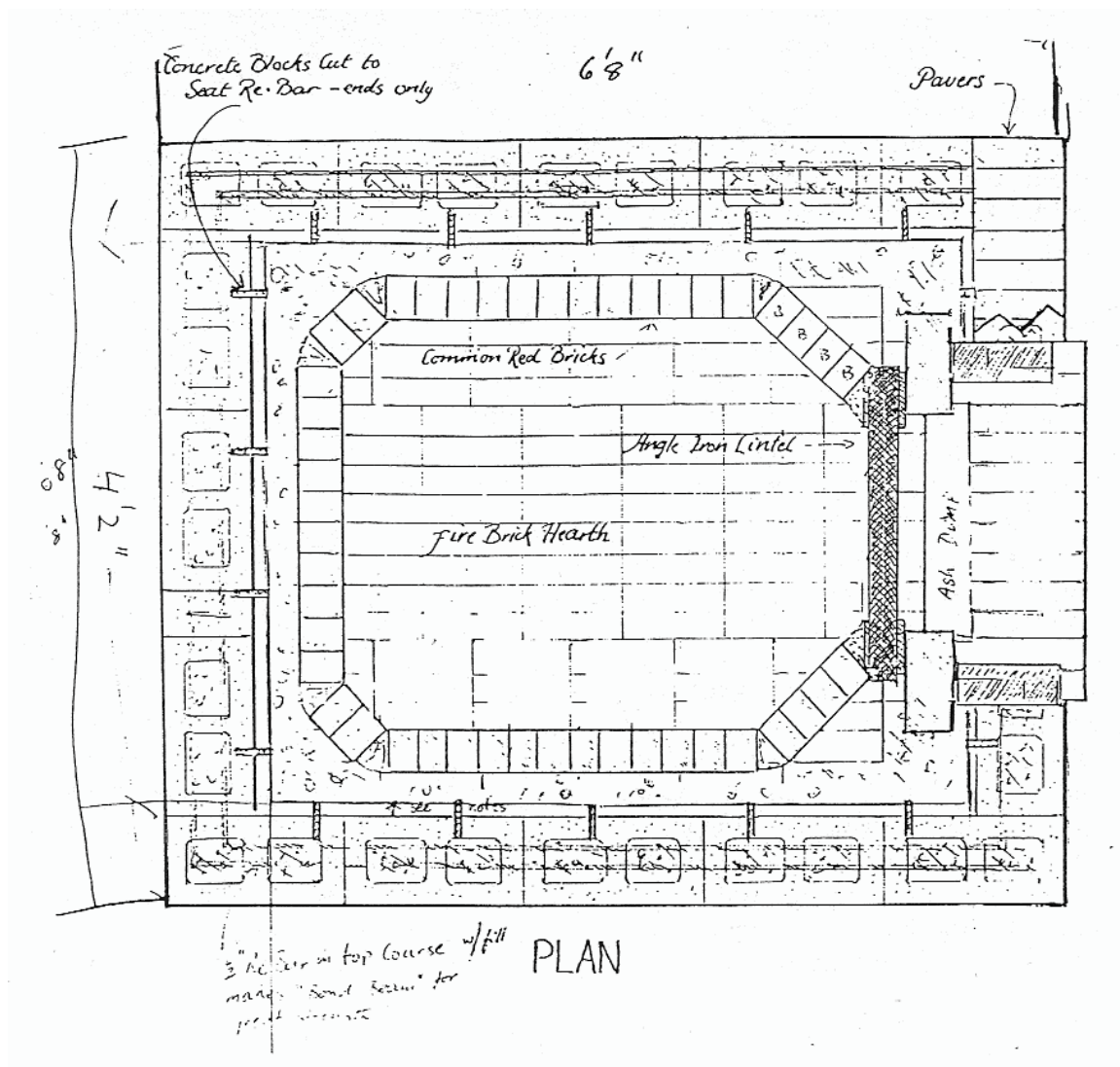
When we bought our oven plans from Alan Scott we showed them to a city building inspector who had been a bricklayer by trade. He said the plans looked good, and he also told us that the oven was too small to come under the building code. So we didn't need a building permit.

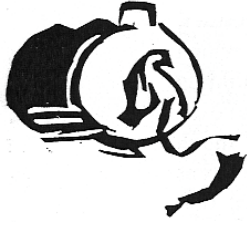
The fire department's safety chief said that since the wood fire to heat the oven would be inside the oven chamber, the fire would not be an "open fire" with the associated fire safety issues. In addition, this oven would be 40 meters away from the nearest building (our rink change-house) and therefore it would pose no fire danger to another

building. We also decided to build it only two meters from a water outlet. And except for the roof framing, which would be made of wood, all building materials would be fireproof.

The fact is, there's so much fireproof insulation around these ovens (inside the roof and wall cavities) that even when such an oven is over 800 degrees Fahrenheit inside, the outside walls and roof are hardly warm at all.

In case someone burns themselves while baking — a common problem of cooks — we have an aloe plant growing beside the oven. The aloe plant has been a good friend, and it works *very* well.





Vandalism:

An oven in a park is vulnerable to unobserved damage by vandals or silly children. For this reason we commissioned an iron oven door with a lock, and we keep the padlock on at all times when the oven is not in use. That means that the oven's working surface won't be damaged. Here are the other **rules of vandalism** that we go by:

Watch new structures more closely: a new structure draws attention to itself for a month or so. After that it seems to fade into the background. Potential vandals lose interest. Our oven had extensive shingle damage two days before the mayor came to inaugurate it. We had our ceremonies with plastic stapled to the roof. We should have been watching the park more during that first month, but we didn't know that then.



Repair vandalism (including graffiti) right away: vandalism damage is a song about power. While the damage is there, the song keeps playing: "we *own* this park, this is *our* turf, you should be *worried* about what we'll do next, you *can't* stop us because we're invisible." But that's not true. The message only works when the damage is on display. When shingles are replaced, gardens are replanted, fences are mended, graffiti is painted over right away, the power song stops playing. After two repairs to the same site, it's seldom necessary to do another repair soon. The vandals get bored.

Give the vandals a few very easy targets: It's pretty easy to rip off shingles, and *also easy to repair them*. We have to replace a few shingles about twice a year, so we keep a supply on hand. The reason the oven shingles are the main focus for vandals is that most vandals, thankfully, are quite lazy. Tearing shingles off the oven takes only a little effort. That's good, because it means the vandals can quickly accomplish their foolish aim and go away satisfied. The rest

of the oven is brick and concrete, which is hard to chip and crack, and also harder to repair. Vandals will usually only do the more strenuous damage if there is nothing easy nearby for them to wreck. If we hadn't had shingles that were easy to rip off, we might have added them later, because they are such a good decoy for vandals.



Supply alternative targets: On the same note, it's helpful to have a few picnic tables nearby so vandals can carve their initials (if they're energetic) or draw some obscene figures (if they brought their felt marker). That way they will be distracted from carving or marking up the oven, which is more difficult to fix. We scrub the obscene stuff off the tables and leave the initials. Some people need to leave their mark.

Let the oven make friends for itself: Our second oven is covered with barn board, much easier to damage. But there hasn't been any damage. By now, many youth have eaten the bread or the pizza, and many children have made pizza at the park with their class. It seems that these young people consider the oven as their partial possession, an important element in "their" park, which they say is the best park anywhere, better than the oven-less parks of their unlucky friends. Their gloating helps us more than

any video surveillance. People want to protect what they're proud of.

Take vandals to court if they're caught: Regrettably, our parks administration in Toronto doesn't have a practice of following cases of vandalism through court. If the police make an arrest in

a park they don't always notify the parks staff either; in fact they rarely do. The message is that trashing things in parks is not likely to bring much inconvenience to persons who are caught. This is not a good message.

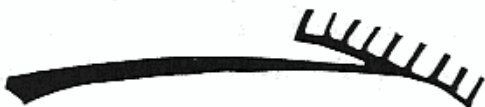


“It was a dark and stormy night...” When a friend of the park caught a group of young guys trashing the playground one November night, these guys threatened to beat her up. But she went home and called the police. The police caught one of the vandals. In the process of trying to follow his case to court we spoke to judges, crown attorneys, defence lawyers, and probation officers, and we tried to make many people aware of the effects of vandalism and threatening behaviour in parks. Even though the charge was later mislaid by the police and therefore never went to court, we learned the young suspect's name, and all our court-visiting paid off. One day we got a call from the probation department saying that the same young man had been ordered by the court to perform 50 hours of community service for an unrelated charge (assaulting a police officer). He was willing to do the hours at our park. This meant we were able to talk to him directly and also he did some useful repair work for us (repairing damage done in the park by other people, whom we did not catch). This young man was unusual in that he, when drinking, did much more damage than vandals normally do (i.e. he didn't follow the "lazy vandal" rule). We found out that when he was sober, he was also able to do much more constructive work than court-ordered workers generally do. Among other things, he built us a really excellent insulating barrier for the door of the oven, which otherwise lets out some heat during baking. He has seen, when sober, how a good park works, and other youth in the park have seen that the park staff will follow through on vandalism. We get respect for that, and the ovens, the buildings, the benches, the gardens, and the playground structures get remarkably little damage.

What to do when your oven is finished:

How to season the oven: When the oven is first built, the cement has moisture in it, which has to dry up slowly. For about two weeks, there should be daily fires in the oven, starting with a very small twig fire. Make the daily fire progressively larger until you can half-fill the oven and burn the branches down to ash. You always build the fire near the front of the oven, with crumpled newspapers right at the front, under the chimney. When you strike a match to the newspapers, the fire will catch right away. The flames will slowly burn their way back into the oven until they run out of wood. Every day, once the fire is well started, you push the mass of flaming branches a bit more deeply into the oven so that all surfaces are gradually accustomed to the heat. You use a rake to push the fire, the rake's teeth turned upward so they don't scratch the oven.

Burn it white for the final fire: The oven is ready to bake bread when you have once burned it white. That means, the oven is filled about half full of hardwood. As the fire burns back into the oven, and you push the fire back even more, you'll see the oven



dome and walls gradually turning white (at the beginning of the burn they're black because of the smoke from the flames). The fire gets so hot that there is no more smoke coming out of the chimney (combustion is pretty complete: that means, little pollution). You can just see the air above the chimney shimmering with heat. When all that remains is just glimmering ash, you can clean the oven out.



Cleaning the oven hearth: we place our wheelbarrow right up against the oven's front wall, and with an inverted rake (so we don't scratch the hearth) we drag all the ashes and coals out the oven's front opening, into the wheelbarrow. We dump these flaming coals onto a campfire site nearby and pour water on them. Then we wipe out the hearth with a damp (not dripping) mop, which sizzles as it touches the hot firebrick.



Then wait. When the hearth is clean, you shut the door and leave the oven alone for two hours while it settles down to an even heat, preferably about 450 degrees Fahrenheit. This heat is pretty steady during the following two hours (good for baking flatbreads, Italian and French bread, and sourdough).

Recipes for baking in an oven with no fire left in

Italian bread, ten loaves at a time: This recipe is adapted from Carol Field, *The Italian Baker*, and Joe Ortiz, *The Village Baker*. It needs a big mixer, like a Hobart floor mixer, because the dough is very wet.



About 20 hours before you plan to make your dough (in summer, reduce the time to 15 hours before), mix:

2 teaspoons of active dry yeast into
6 cups of spring water

in the mixer bowl. Let the yeast dissolve for 10 minutes.

Then add:

2 kilograms of organic unbleached white flour and, using the dough hook, mix just until all the flour is incorporated on *first speed*. Change to *second speed* and mix for *five minutes*.

Scrape the dough into a large bowl with room for the dough to triple in volume. This is called the *starter*.

Cover and let stand in a cool room until the next day, preferably for about 20 hours.

The next day, make your fire six or seven hours before you want to bake. When the 20 hours for your starter to ripen is up, and your oven is past the middle of its burn:

Scrape all the starter (it will have risen up in the bowl and fallen again, and it will have lots of small bubbles in it) into the mixer bowl and add:

6 more cups of spring water. Break up the dough with your hands so it begins to combine with the water and doesn't splash you when you turn on the machine.

Using the dough hook, mix on *first speed* until the dough and water are completely combined.

Then add: **1 kilo of all-purpose unbleached white organic flour** and **8 teaspoons of sea salt.**

If you like, you could also add:

4 teaspoons of dried rosemary (or 6 of fresh) and
4 tablespoons of olive oil.

Mix on *first speed* until combined, then add:

1 more kilo of the all-purpose flour. When all the flour is incorporated, switch to *second speed* and mix for *five minutes*.

Scrape the dough into a large bowl with room for the dough to double in volume and cover. Let rise in a cool room for between 2 and 2 ½ hours, until it's doubled in volume.

An hour or so after this dough has begun its rise, clean the coals and ashes out of your oven and wash it out. Close the oven door so the oven can settle down for at least two hours.

When the dough has doubled, scrape it out of the bowl onto a well-floured surface and let it rest for 15 minutes, covered.

Then cut the dough into ten equal pieces. Put the pieces into ten greased loaf-pans and gently poke them down with wet hands, as you would focaccia. Cover the bread pans and let them rise in a warm (not too warm) place for about an hour.

Prepare a bowl of rosemary leaves in olive oil (about **3 teaspoons of dried rosemary, or 4 of fresh, in half a cup of olive oil**). Prepare another bowl, of **sea salt**.

Meantime measure your oven temperature. If the oven is over 500 Fahrenheit, leave the door open for ten minutes. Then close the oven door and measure again. The oven should be about 500 degrees when the bread goes in.

When the bread is almost double in the pans, use your fingers to dimple every loaf with the rosemary-olive oil mixture. Wash and dry your hands carefully and then sprinkle sea salt on every loaf.

Take the loaf pans outside and push them into the oven. Close the oven door making sure it's tightly sealed and no steam can escape. If you have to go where you can't keep an eye on the oven, lock it. If you don't, the smell is so good that someone will come along and open the door to have a look. The oven door should not be opened now. Don't check the loaves for half an hour unless you feel the oven is too hot. Then, at half an hour, pull the loaves forward in the oven, take them out of their pans and put them back in, right on the hearth. Close the oven door and go away.

Come back in 10-15 minutes and test for done-ness. (They should be around 190 degrees Fahrenheit internal temperature, if you want to check with an instant-read thermometer.) If they still seem

a little moist, let them stay in the oven a further 5 minutes. The great artisan bakers say that people are much more likely to underbake their bread than to overbake it, and underbaking makes mushy crusts.

When the loaves are done, take them out of the oven and put them loosely into a big basket (laundry baskets work well), so that air will circulate around them as they cool.

If you are baking for a community event it's better to bake twenty such loaves because they get eaten very quickly. We often make ten with rosemary and ten without. In the plain loaves we substitute **three cups of fresh ground whole wheat flour** and **half a cup of fresh ground rye** for the equivalent amount of unbleached white flour. It tastes good and looks beautiful too.



Two excellent baking aids at our park:

1. An electric stone-grind flour mill. We had to fund-raise for ours because such mills cost around \$500. But the fresh whole flour is a delicious addition and lots of people in the neighbourhood come and grind their own small sacks of flour for home, organic of course.

2. A second-hand steel cupboard with shelves and racks. We bought ours at a restaurant-supply store. We use it for giving the loaves their last rise ("proofing" them) and then for rolling the loaf pans out to the oven along the path (because all such cupboards have casters). Moving one cupboard is much easier than taking ten or twenty loaves out on trays.

By the time the ten loaves have finished baking, the oven will be down to about 400 degrees. You can now put in a load of breads that have sweetener in them (like oatmeal bread with honey), or you can bake cinnamon rolls.

Jan Schallert's Dufferin Grove Park cinnamon rolls. Jan says she adapted this from the recipe for sweet rolls in the *Fannie Farmer Cookbook*:

6 cups warm milk
2 cups sugar
8 teaspoons salt
2 cups (1 lb.) soft butter
16 eggs (yes!)

Heat milk in saucepan; add sugar, salt and butter. Let cool to lukewarm. Add eggs, mixing well.

4 tablespoons active dry yeast
2 cups warm water
Add yeast to water, let stand 5 minutes to dissolve.

8 cups whole wheat (bread/all-purpose) flour
12 cups unbleached (bread/all-purpose) flour

Combine milk mixture and yeast liquid in very large bowl. Add the whole wheat flour and about half of the unbleached flour and beat well till you have a wet spongy dough. Cover and let rise in bowl until doubled (about an hour). Add the remaining flour and more if necessary to make the dough firm enough to handle. Knead until smooth and elastic (15 - 20 minutes). Cover and let rise in bowl until double in bulk.

Punch down, divide into eight equal pieces, roll each into large rectangle (about 1/4 inch thick and about twice as long as it is wide), spread with soft butter (about 1/4 - 1/2 cup), leaving a 1 inch margin on the lower edge free of butter, sprinkle buttered area with white sugar or spread with brown sugar, amount as desired, and sprinkle with ground cinnamon to taste (other fillings and additions, e.g., poppy seeds, possible).

After three to six hours the oven goes down to around 225 degrees. Then you can put in slow-cooking casseroles with lids. If they have lots of liquid they can stay in the oven overnight, and be brought home the next day in time for lunch. There are many slow-cooked stews that were traditionally cooked in the residual heat of a wood-burning oven.



Roll down from top edge, pinching bottom edge to seal. Slice off rounds about 1 inch thickness, sawing with a serrated knife. Press lightly into buttered pan, leaving some space between rolls. If desired, sprinkle with cinnamon sugar. Cover and let rise till almost doubled, bake at 400 degrees F for 15-20 minutes. Jan says, "There are all sorts of other excesses which can be perpetrated, such as frosting after baking with a powdered sugar, milk, plus or minus butter and/ or vanilla glaze."

These cinnamon rolls only lasted half an hour the last time Jan baked them at the park.

For example: in orthodox Jewish villages the village oven wasn't lit during the sabbath, of course, but there was always residual heat that didn't "count" as an active fire. On Friday afternoon the women would put in pots of different kinds of stew called "cholent," which would then cook very slowly in the still-warm oven for about 24 hours. Soon after sundown on Saturday these pots would be carried home to the dinner tables, all ready to eat, with the most delicious aroma wafting through the streets on the way.

Beef Cholent with prunes:

2 pounds fat beef, browned
1 tablespoon salt
2 pounds sweet potatoes
½ teaspoon pepper
1 pound prunes
5 tablespoons brown sugar
Juice of one lemon

Alternate the layers. Mix salt, pepper, and sugar with the lemon juice. Pour over the stew and add enough water to cover, with an extra two inches on top. Cover the pot and put into your park oven overnight or for ten hours, with the temperature measuring no higher than 225 degrees at the beginning, and steadily going down.

The first time I made this stew, it was for the performance of a show outdoors at the park, called "A Jewish Wedding." The "wedding" was a staged event with the bride and groom chosen from the audience, and the rest of the wedding party were actors and musicians. The performance ended at the bake oven, and I opened the oven and took out three pots (made from a recipe book the night before) of what looked to me like an almost black mush. I was appalled. We had baked challah and it was all sliced and ready to accompany what I took to be an inedible and perhaps burned mess. To my surprise, some older people from the audience said, "oh, cholent, how wonderful!" They dished it up and as I waited, uneasy, they said, "it's as delicious as butter. This is exactly what it's supposed to taste like. Come on over here, everybody, come and taste this!" And in two minutes it was all gone. It was the prunes, I guess, that had turned it black, and the long cooking that had broken it down into one substance that people felt was a kind of ambrosia.



Pizza for thirty (basic, very familiar):

Pizza and bread-making don't go together, not at the same time. For baking bread and casseroles, the oven has to be cleared of fire. Pizza, on the other hands, needs a fire in.

If you are starting with an oven still warm from previous days of baking, make a medium-sized fire about two and a half hours before you want to cook the pizza.

Then make a **pizza dough**: In the bowl of your standing mixer, dissolve:

1 ¾ tablespoons active dry yeast in

7 ½ cups lukewarm water.

In another bowl, mix:

17 cups of all-purpose flour,

9 teaspoons of salt, and

1 teaspoon of ground black pepper.

When the yeast has dissolved for 10 minutes, mix it with the dough hook on *first speed* for a moment, then add about half the amount of flour mixture, mix again on *first speed*. Add:

½ cup of olive oil and mix, then add the rest of the flour. Mix on *first speed* until all the flour is incorporated, then change to *second speed* and mix for five minutes, until the dough is smooth.

Put the dough into a bowl covered with a clean damp towel, and set it in a cool spot. Push the fire back a little and make sure it's burning brightly. Gather a good supply of **short pieces of softwood** for later, which you can throw in to keep the flames bright and hot, and put this wood in a **wheelbarrow** right by the oven. Lean a **hoe** against the oven, for pushing the wood pieces and the pizzas around later. Prepare your basic toppings and put them in bowls covered with plastic – **tomato sauce,**

shredded cheese, cut-up peppers, pepperoni. These things should be put into a **cooler** with some **cold packs.** People can be encouraged to bring any other more exotic toppings themselves. (For the basic pizza materials we charge \$2.00 per pizza at Dufferin Grove Park. If somebody hasn't got the money, they can help with the dishes in exchange.)

Prepare your tools: **rolling pins, spoons, the wooden peels** and **one metal peel, cornmeal** for the peels, **flour** for the table, **a basin** for hand-washing, **two towels** for drying, a **dough cutter** for scraping the table clean, a **damp cloth** for washing the table, **metal platters** for holding the cooked pizzas, a **pizza wheel** to cut the pizza, **paper napkins.** These things fit nicely into a **wheeled shopping buggy** fitted with a cloth or cardboard liner.

Set up **three clean tables** by the oven:

-one table for the pizza cook, with the platters and the pizza cutters and the napkins and the metal peel.

-one table for rolling, with the rolling pins, the flour, and the handwashing basin with water and a towel nearby,

-and one table for corn meal and the toppings and the wooden peels.

About fifteen minutes before the start of pizza-making, push the fire to the back and sides of the oven, making sure it's still got wood to burn (coals are not enough). Wash the free hearth space you've cleared with a **damp mop**, repeatedly, until you're sure the hearth is absolutely clean.

Cleaning the hearth: Once a provincial member of parliament came to the park to give us an award. He brought along his secretary and a reporter and several police sergeants. We had some teenagers there to make pizzas after the ceremony. They were pretty experienced, but somehow the hearth didn't get cleaned as well as it should. The skid wood we use often has nails in it, which are left lying in the oven after the wood is all burned up. They all have to be cleared out with the mop, but people must have been in a hurry that day. So when the boys brought the cooked pizzas inside to serve, and began to cut one up for the member of parliament, they hit a great big nail with the pizza wheel. The nail had been baked right into the bottom of the pizza. I knew nothing of this until I looked at the boys, who were all whispering to one another, their faces red with the effort of trying not to laugh, or to tell. They had already put that pizza in the trash and checked the other ones very carefully. The member of parliament complimented their pizza and ate quite a lot of it. He never knew. But the kids talked about it all over the park, the near-miss of making the member of parliament guy crack his tooth on a nail, the disgrace it would have been for the park and everyone connected to it, the award that might have been rescinded right after it was given. Scandal!! – narrowly avoided. I don't think any of us washed out the oven hearth afterwards without thinking about that almost-disaster.



When the hearth is clean, punch down the pizza dough and cut it up into **equal portions** about the size of a tennis ball. Lay the dough balls out on **two floured trays**, cover with **two damp towels**, and set them on the dough-rolling table. Instruct the people who have come to make pizza to roll the dough out **very thin** and to scatter some **corn meal** on the wooden peel before laying the rolled dough on it. Watch to make sure they don't start putting the toppings on before the rolled dough is **on the peel**. Then watch to make sure the tomato sauce **stays on the dough**, leaving a border without sauce around the edge (if tomato sauce gets smeared onto the peel, it will be hard to slide the pizza onto the hearth), and watch also to

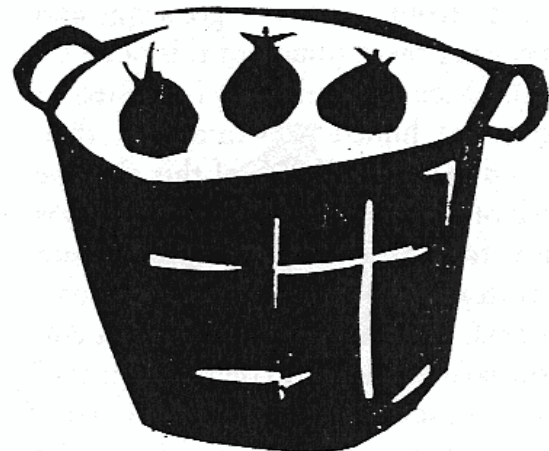
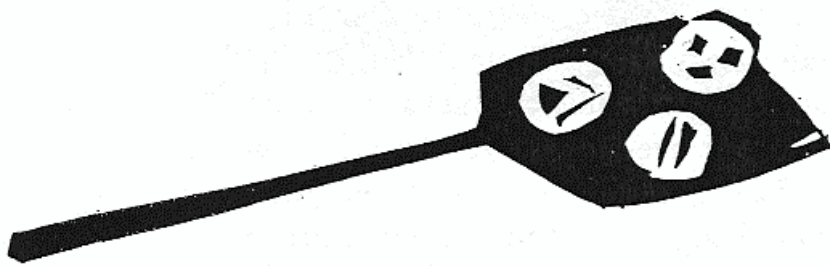
make sure people don't heap their pizzas too full (greed is not encouraged).

Once the pizzas are brought over to the pizza cook and slid into the oven, the empty peels can be returned to the tables for the next people to use. If the wood at the sides and back of the oven is flaming brightly (the cook should feed in **small pieces of softwood** whenever the flames get lower), the pizzas will take less than five minutes each. With four or five of these smallish pizzas cooking in every batch, soon enough everyone will have had enough to eat. The children will run around and play while the adults sit or stand and talk to each other, or doze on a sunny bench. It's very nice.

More traditional pizza (unfamiliar, more subtle)

This kind is sometimes simpler. The dough has more olive oil in it, and it's pulled and stretched rather than rolled, and sometimes all that goes on it is some olive oil and salt and some sage or basil or thyme picked right then from the herb garden by the oven - maybe with a small scattering of cheese or a few slices of red or green tomatoes, also just pulled off the vine. Lots of park visitors don't recognize that as pizza, but when people try it, they often like it very much. You can see the alchemy of the dough, and you taste the simple ingredients from the garden more dramatically that way. The oven transforms the pizza into a wonderful fragrant round that you can hold in your hands, no need for a plate. The food is the plate. No dishes to wash.

Oven-dried tomatoes: If there's still a bit of heat left the next day after baking (or, when the park oven has been fired for pizza for a few days in succession, it keeps heat for three or even four days without a new fire), you can dry tomatoes. Get a bushel or a box of Roma tomatoes at the peak of their ripeness and cheapness. Wash them and slice them in half lengthwise. Place these halves, cut side up, on baking trays and put them in the park oven. The oven temperature should not be over 250 degrees Fahrenheit; cooler is even better. Close the oven door. Check them after four hours and remove any tomatoes that are finished. Put the unfinished ones back in and keep checking every hour until all are done to the desired point of dryness. Put the tomatoes into jars, cover with olive or canola oil, add some herbs if you like, and enjoy them all winter or as long as they last.



A WOOD-FIRED COMMUNAL OVEN IN A PARK: WHY BOTHER?

An oven in a park is nice to look at when you're walking through the park, and the pizza tastes good, but cooking in a wood-fired oven is a lot more trouble than turning a dial on your stove. Cooking with fire *in public* means people will come and talk to you while you're working, and that can make it very hard to concentrate. If lots of people come for a festival, the clean-up can be a nightmare. **So what's in it for the person who goes to all this trouble?**

There are two things I can think of as an answer. The first has to do with an attribute of food that is no longer common, a kind of extreme simplicity.

SIMPLE FOOD: A LITTLE HISTORY

Elizabeth Meyer-Renschhausen, a German historian of food preparation and women's work, has written about 18th century ways of cooking everyday meals in rural households. Grains were then the staple of the European diet. The main labour connected with grains was at the front end – growing and harvesting them (much of this done by men). Once the grain was harvested, it had to be hulled or winnowed, then ground in a mill (much of this also the work of men). By the time the grain was ready for the kitchen, its preparation was often very simple. The women took the oats, barley, millet, buckwheat and so on, soaked them and then put them in a pot on the fire. The grains were fresh, the soaking/cooking water from the springs pure, and by all accounts the taste of this grain porridge when cooked over a fire was so satisfying that country people seem to have longed for little else to be the mainstay of their diet. But as the industrial revolution transformed Europe, driving the country people away

from their land and into the towns and cities, it transformed the way they ate as well. By the middle of the 19th century, when people's diet had diversified everywhere, older people still sighed for the taste of their grain porridges, fallen out of fashion or displaced by the efficient mass marketing of foodstuffs. When we look back and see how plain the early meals were, we may feel sorry for our ancestors, living that way, even if it turns out that the women didn't spend much time slaving over a hot stove. But maybe our ancestors would have felt sorry for *us*. Fresh grain and pure water, when cooked together over a fire with a little salt, *may* have tasted better than anything we could ever get at a fast-food place or even at the supermarket. We can't know for sure, because everything has changed and those other times are gone. But at our park, when people dry tomatoes in the park oven, or dig up some potatoes from the garden beside the oven, wash off the dirt, cut them in quarters and roast them in the oven with just some oil and rosemary, these simple things taste astonishingly good. The same is true for the bread, which can be made with such simple ingredients. If a sourdough starter is used, even the dried yeast package disappears from the preparations. While the loaves are baking, the smell is rich and subtle. When the bread is pulled out, there are the gold-brown crusty loaves. These foods look and taste — different. Maybe it's a little bit like the food people ate in older times.

There are people still living who experienced the simplicity of exchange anchored by a bread oven. Bernard Clavel, a French writer whose father was a baker, wrote that the bakeshop was on the way to local saltworks, and that his mother would open up at five in the morning so that the

salters could buy bread on their way to work. His father sold bread to the wine-growers, some of whom gave a cask a wine in exchange, and to the wood-cutter (huge eight-pound loaves), who in return would deliver the wood needed to fire the bread-oven. When the baker ran out of salt, he would drive up to the saltworks to pick up a sack, paid for — in bread. [Jerome Assire, *The Book of Bread*, Flammarion, 1996]



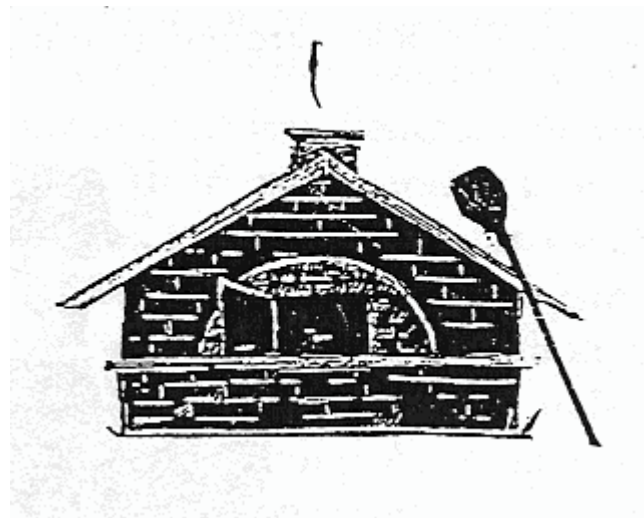
WE CAN'T GO BACK THERE:

We're cut off by centuries from the experience of our ancestors. The wood that we use for firing the park oven is not collected from the forest around our houses. We burn waste pieces from hardwood skids, transported from all over the world and originally used, perhaps, to bring shiploads of Nike running shoes here from Taiwan. Our flour was brought by truck or train from Western Canada; we didn't grow it and we don't know how to find out who did. The spring water is shipped in from Quebec somewhere. Right across the street from the

oven is the Dufferin Mall, feverish commerce all the time; there's nothing simple about that. When we want to know if the oven is the right temperature for the bread to go in, we go over there and buy a thermometer at Wal-mart, a store owned by an immensely rich man in Arkansas. And I'm writing this description on a computer, in a medium owned by an immensely rich man in Seattle.

AND YET: there are the interesting bodily sensations of loading and lighting the oven, the heat, the shaping of the bread on the rough wooden peel. There's no dressed-up "historical guide" in sight to tell us about the old days. There are just these old, simple motions

happening *now*, with the aim of baking bread, or maybe just potatoes. If it's raining you get wet, and you might feel clammy, smoky, greasy with soot like a peasant. It's not at all glamorous. You might be hungry and you might want your bread to bake up properly. Of course it's true that, unlike your ancestors, if the bread fails, you can go to the mall supermarket and buy some. But over there you can't buy the kind of bread you can make here, so you need to attend to *this* bread with a single-mindedness that feels out of date, exciting.



That's one reason a person might want to bake bread in a wood-fired communal oven, and it leads us, as well, into the second reason:

THE CHANCE TO HAVE SURPRISING ENCOUNTERS WITHOUT GOING TO A FOREIGN COUNTRY: It seems that a change is as good as a rest. That must be one reason why people are willing to put up with crowded airplanes and tour buses and cramped hotel rooms and pulling their rumpled clothes around in heavy suitcases — to see something exotic, something astonishing, something that's quite different from one's daily routine. But such trips are expensive and if something goes wrong you're far from home, and besides, mass tourism is a pretty odd way to experience the world.

It's possible to get outside of everyday happenings right in the place where one lives, of course. One alternative to searching, through travelling, for memorable people different than ourselves and experiences unknown to us is *to stand somewhere* — in a public park, for example — and see whether people and experiences search us out.

Standing in one place, while the unexpected coalesces around us, is quite another thing from the most common form of travelling-while-staying-home these

days: on the internet, the virtual trip taken along brain synapses as one's eyes scan the computer monitor.

Of course, literally "standing in one place" so you can see what other people are doing isn't really such a good idea. People who stand in one spot and stare at other people scare those people away. It's unnatural, it's acting like a tourist or a person whose mind is unbalanced. But if there is a baker in the park, who is there to bake bread, while it's true that she is firmly located by that oven for some hours, that she is a fixed point while others go by — still, she is occupied with a very engaging activity of her own. People are drawn to take a look, coming as near or remaining as distant as they choose, or as the baker chooses. The encounters that may happen as a result of this approach are a side effect of the baker's activity in the park. But they may be so vivid at times that they become an adventure in themselves, and the baker may return home at the end of a long day with much more than fresh bread to think about. Here are some stories from the first few years after the oven was built, to illustrate.



OVEN STORIES

March 12: Margie invited the West End public health inspector for lunch. He and I had had some testy discussions when I first wanted to get food into the park. One day he told me to relax, that he didn't care about the red tape, he cared about food safety, and that he was willing to give us advice without throwing the book at us. So that made Margie invite him. And in fact he came with a very friendly manner. We asked him, how will we keep the baking legal? He said, don't worry about it much. There's a loophole in the Health Act. It started out with church suppers. Sometime fifteen years ago some health department tried to shut down the church suppers at a county fair, and their member of parliament just about lost his seat over it. Politicians know that community suppers are practically untouchable. You're a community group. You don't come under the restaurant rules. So don't worry too much about our red tape. Concentrate on keeping your food clean and not poisoning your neighbours. Handwashing, handwashing! Get all your community people washing their hands when they cut up food. Try to wash the dishes hot. Forget about adding a lot of chlorine disinfectant. Some people think too much chlorine can make food workers sick. Just have lots of clean hot water, and clean hands, and only very fresh food. Don't let things spoil.

What a gift this sensible man gave us.

September 8: Lisa, the artist who painted our wildflower signs, lit the first fire. Dave Miller, who had been such a good amateur helper to our oven contractor, assisted by giving her a bundle of twigs and she stuck them in the oven on top of some

newspapers, struck a match and then --- by glory! The oven was lit. The flames flared up and started spreading back. The Italian men were walking round and round the oven, exclaiming and muttering. All of us looked at each other and laughed, and slapped each other on the shoulders, and laughed, and scratched our heads. It didn't really make sense, but here it was. A real bread oven, far from Calabria. Real smoke coming out of the chimney.

There it was.

October 4: We decided to have an opening ceremony, and Mayor Hall let it be known that she would be the right person to "open" the oven. It's scheduled for October 7th. Because we wanted to serve some wine with the bread, we had to fence off the area around there. The Parks crew brought the fencing and pounded in the steel stakes. I could see the basketball guys watching. All summer long they watched the oven being built, but kept their own counsel.

October 5: I sent out a press release about the oven, and the CBC morning radio show said they wanted us to do a phone-in interview. Yesterday afternoon one of their staff came by with a cellphone, and left it here for us. Dave Miller and I started a twig fire in the oven early this morning and stood there with the cell phone and an umbrella, because it was raining. At about 8.30 the phone rang and it was the show's host, saying, "one minute to air time." We waited in total silence until he said, "well folks, we're back and we have a report for you now on Toronto's first outdoor community bake-oven." I chattered into the phone for a while and then Dave got on. He held the phone near the fire so people could hear the

twigs burning. The host finished the interview with a little joke: "Dave Miller and Jutta Mason. A miller and a mason for Toronto's first brick bread oven in a park. How about that?"

While we were speaking into the radio world, some people walked over. They stood and watched the two of us under our umbrella, taking turns talking on a cell phone by the bake oven. When the interview was over they said they'd been driving by the park and heard the start of the interview on their car radio. They looked over and there was the oven with us standing there, so they stopped their car and got out and watched the rest of the interview in person.

October 6: Fabio, the boy who always knows everything first, came to my house early in the morning. "You should see the park," he said. "It's a mess." I said "What do you mean?"

"The oven roof shingles are all over the ground and the benches are turned upside down and also all those extra trash baskets they brought when they put the fence up, they're lying in the flowerbeds." I walked down to the park with him, and sure enough, somebody had decided to go ahead and wreak havoc. Fabio and I pulled the wire trash baskets out of the flowers, and picked the shingles up off the ground. We set all the benches upright again. When we were done it looked better, but the roof was ripped right down to the plywood in places. I called Dave Miller and we stapled plastic on the plywood, in case it rained.

Later someone told me a rumour that the basketball guys thought we were putting up a permanent fence, and didn't like it.

October 7: D-day. I got up very early, at 5.30, and went to light the fire. The park was dark, and cold, and very damp. The twigs were so long and so tangled in the firewood barrel that they came out in big

bunches that still had to be pulled apart. They scratched me with what seemed to me clear malevolence. I stuffed the oven full of twigs, hoping they were not the green ones we were saving for the spring — I couldn't tell. As I lit the match, light began to appear in the east, showing outlines of heavy clouds. The wood caught, but it burned feebly. The park seemed lonely and dangerous and I felt so foolish. But there was no way out of this official oven opening.

While I waited for the fire to catch properly, I took the Parks Department's three-colour bunting and started fastening it to the fence. This was a cumbersome job and I didn't know what I was doing, but it distracted me from the morbid regrets I was having about stupid park bake-ovens and stupid, ugly, menacing public space.

An hour after first light Dave and another staff arrived. I was struggling with the bunting, and the fire was still flickering feebly. It was by now fairly obvious that the twigs must be green. But which twigs weren't? They all looked identical. Dave showed me his secret (why secret?!?) stash of drier wood, so we squeezed some of those pieces in the oven too, trying to leave a bit of room for air to circulate. The fire responded, and we were rewarded by a giant plume of white smoke that hung a few feet off the ground and floated all the way down to Dufferin Street. Then the wind came up, lifting the smoke higher into the air and also tearing off my feeble fastening for the bunting.

By then, though, the park was in full morning light and all the rest of the special-events staff had arrived. Someone went to buy coffees and someone else turned out to be a bunting expert. My pre-dawn desperation gradually melted away.

By the time the mayor came at noon, the fire was not half-way burned back and the oven didn't feel very hot. We couldn't

bake bread yet but Isabel had made a soup over a campfire beside the oven. There were thirty people there at most. The mayor made a little speech, first outside by the oven and then in the rink house, because it began to rain. She spoke about love and community. We offered her a bowl of Isabel's soup and no bread, and then she went off to her next engagement. After she left, though, a neighbourhood baker came with dough and said — the dough's ready. We'll just have to bake it with the fire still inside. She pushed the fire as far back as possible and stuck the loaves in. The clouds divided to show a little blue, and more people began to straggle over from the neighbourhood. We poured out glasses of red wine and cups of soup and half an hour later the bread came out. It was lumpy and dark on one side but it smelled so extremely good that I thought people were going to tear it, or each other, to pieces to get some. Another baker came to help out, and another batch went in the oven. A photographer arrived from the *Toronto Sun* and took photographs. More bread came out and was eaten, and a third baker put her bread in. The sky cleared completely and it grew even colder. The bunting flapped around in the wind and we realized that all the wine drinkers were inside. All the trouble we went to, to get an *outdoor* wine license! We would have never had to put up the fence if we'd said on our liquor permit that the wine would be inside. Maybe then no one would have got alarmed and ripped the shingles off the roof. And all that infernal bunting, that took half the morning to put up! But there wasn't time to think about that. More people came, more bread came out and more bread went in, and musicians made music. By the time the oven was officially opened and the bread was all eaten and the people went home, the oven was lovely and hot.

We realized we definitely need a better wood supply.

October 13: Thirty-nine years ago today my mother, my little brother, and I got off the boat in Montreal and embraced my embarrassed, emotional father, who had come to Canada from Germany a whole year before us. On that day 39 years ago I thought that I would just stay in Canada until I could decently leave home (I was nine) and then sail the high seas for the rest of my days. Who would ever want to live anywhere other than on an ocean liner? But then I got stuck on solid ground, and now I seem to live much of the time in a park. I stay in one place and other people sail by. I was watching at the oven while Nigel attached the oven door, and three different people came by to tell us something about the ovens of their youth. There was a woman from the Ukraine, a man from Trinidad, and another man, very old, from Poland. He spoke about his mother, who baked once a week and always tested the oven heat by throwing in a handful of flour and watching how quickly it turned brown. You never taste bread like she baked, nowadays, he said.

I told him I will never bake bread like his old mother baked, but I hope I'll learn, in ten or twenty years, how to bake something very good. Unless, of course, I've left on an ocean-going ship before then.

There was a phone message when I got home. A Parks staff person had phoned from another community centre, saying there was a very rude man who wanted to get hold of me, something about firewood, and here was his number. I called the man and he said, "I'm sorry. I was very rude to the employee because she behaved so stupidly. I asked her about the bread oven and she said she knew nothing about it. But she is supposed to know if she answers the telephone!"

It turned out he had read the *Sun* article about the oven and he wanted to offer

us an unlimited supply of perfect firewood. "I'm from Guyana," he said, "and in Guyana people believe in helping each other out. You could even say that's their main hobby. I have a small factory here in Toronto, in which I employ 12 of my countrymen to take apart big hardwood skids which are cracked. Then we rebuild them into smaller, sound skids, which leaves a lot of hardwood scraps that are waste. But I, Hussain Ali, do not wish to take this wood to the garbage dump when I could be giving it to the park for the bake oven. I have twenty barrels of it right now, and I'm willing to deliver it to you myself, if you will just give me the directions. Then you can show me the oven and I can see for myself whether it's the same kind of oven my family used to bake in, in Guyana. It sounds to me like you are doing the perfect thing, and you should be supported. I want nothing for this, only the satisfaction of doing something helpful. Thanks to Allah I have the means of doing so."

So I gave him the directions. After I hung up, I thought, so that was the point of the oven-opening festival. There was the cold and the rain, the empty park and the green twigs, the wretched bunting blowing off in the wind, but then the reporter came and he wrote his article and this man from Guyana read it and wants to bring us perfect wood, forever.

October 15: I waited in the park today until an old, blotchy van drove up, its back doors tied shut with rope. Hussain Ali got out, and his wife, and their teenage son. We shook hands, I pointed out the oven, he backed his truck up to the garage, and the three of them unloaded the promised barrels of wood. The wood looked perfect, as he said. Four-foot-long, mainly hardwood pieces, from all over the world. Some of the pieces were rose-coloured with a beautiful

grain. Some of them were dark, almost black.

I've heard that in Malaysia, mahogany trees are sometimes cut up for skid-wood, sold by corrupt politicians to the Japanese for next to nothing. Then this wood travels across the world bearing its loads of refrigerators or television sets, or boxes of cheap plastic toys bound for our local dollar stores. Eventually the wood cracks under its loads and is picked up by our friend Hussein Ali at the trucking terminal. He and his immigrant countrymen scavenge the good wood, and the cracked ends are converted into heat and bread in our oven. The wood has travelled so far from its original grove, now perhaps turned into a wasteland. It's hard to know what sense it makes, and why we would end up baking an out-of-date bread with such squandered materials.

But that's only one, regrettable layer of reality. Another layer is the kindness of the Ali family, all three expertly rotating the heavy drums on their bases, until they were neatly stored in the corner of the garage. We walked around the park, and they were curious about everything they saw. "The oven is somewhat like the ones in Guyana," Hussain said, "and in another way not like them at all. Those ovens back home are long gone anyway, at least in the larger places. I can't really remember them."

November 15: We had rink staff orientation for the winter skating season. Since only one of last year's rink staff elected to return, we had quite a few new rink guards (three of them female!), plus Lily Weston as the daytime building attendant and Jacqueline Peeters to make pizza at the oven on family Sundays. Last week Jacqueline came with a pizza-dough recipe from the restaurant where her husband works. We practised making it in the oven. It was really good.

So we decided that at this rink staff meeting we'd serve pizza from the oven. That meant that while Tino was meeting inside with the rink staff I was out at the pizza oven making pizzas. When the first four pizzas were done I brought them inside to the meeting and went back outside with four more to cook. Five older boys were sitting on the oven roof. I knew a couple of them. They were clowning dangerously and they seemed in a strange state. They obeyed when I told them to get down, but then one of them grabbed the rake from me and pulled some burning twigs from the oven. In two seconds they were waving the burning wood at each other's faces. I shouted at one kid I knew, to stop his friends, but he didn't acknowledge me. They were completely caught up in a new game, pulling out more flaming branches, flinging them at each other like snowballs. Because of the early snowfall we had, the flames were snuffed as soon as the pieces hit the ground, but it seemed like any minute someone would get a burning brand in the face. I screamed at them but they were possessed with the thrill of their strange game. I kept hoping someone inside the building would hear all the yelling, but the distance was too great, and no one came out. I was caught. I couldn't get them to stop and I felt I couldn't leave them to get help in the building, with the firebrands flying around.

When the wildest one of the boys went back to the oven with the rake, to get some more fire, I yanked the rake from his hands and threw it on the ground. He cursed me and I grabbed him by the sleeve and shouted at him and just started pulling him toward the rink house. He resisted but I was so angry at him not listening to me that I was stronger than him. So I just kept dragging him along.

Part way to the rink house his resistance stopped and he began to wail loudly. When I opened the door of the rink

house, the rink meeting was interrupted by the spectacle of their pizza cook (me), grim and a bit hysterical, holding a weeping boy by the scruff of his jacket. I handed him over to Tino and ran outside with three staff to bring in the others, but they had run off across the park. When we came back inside Tino was gone — the kid he was holding had twisted out of his grasp and taken off, with Tino in pursuit.

Tino came back a few minutes later, saying the kid, whom he knew very slightly from another community centre, had got away. Even when he was running, Tino could still hear the kid cursing and sobbing loudly.

I couldn't understand their behaviour other than to think they were all under the influence of some speedy drug. If anyone had got hurt by the fire, would that have been the end of the oven? The end of an eye? A huge lawsuit against the Park?

Jacqueline cooked the rest of the pizza. I had to calm down.

December 6: St.Nicholas' Day. I decided to bake some bread, so I came down early and put a fire in the oven. Hussain's wood was just as he said, dry and hard and perfect for heating a bake oven. In the afternoon I mixed bread at a table set up in the rink house. I wanted to do the mixing right in front of the kids who were skating, so I had all my ingredients set up on the table and I went back and forth between stirring and kneading, three times for three different kinds of bread. At first the kids ignored me but after a while some of them came over. One of the girls helped me mix herbs into the final dough, and told me her mother makes corn bread at home. She said, "if my mother saw me making bread, she wouldn't believe her eyes." Some boys she knew went by and jeered at her, in a friendly way, and she turned red and cursed them, in a friendly way (I think). And then she kept

kneading, with great concentration, until the dough was ready to put in the pans.

December 21: It was Jacqueline's last pizza Sunday before Christmas. How she accomplishes these days is almost unfathomable. But each Sunday there have been more families than the previous week. I guess people like the exotic combination of skating and wood-oven pizza, even just the smell of the smoke that drifts over the ice from the oven. Maybe some people come just to see how Jacqueline manages to juggle it all — surely a piece of performance art.

She arrives first thing when the rink opens at 10, as often as not with all three sons. The little one is only five but already a fine skater, as are the older two. As soon as they get here they all four go out to the garage and fill the wheelbarrow with wood and newspaper to start the fire in the oven. This is not so easy. Vigilance is required, in case a piece of skid wood has paint spots or some other suspect substance on it, that might not be destroyed by burning at 800 degrees. To keep the food pure, four pairs of eyes are needed to scan every board that's put in the wheel barrow.

Once all the wood has been put in the oven, the newspaper crumpled up, and the match struck, they go into the rink house and the boys get their skates on. Jacqueline tightens their laces and adjusts helmets and sorts gloves until they all leave for outside. Then she hides their bags under the counter in the kitchen and gets her dough started. This is easier now that we've got the loan of an old Hobart mixer. Jacqueline puts water in the mixer bowl, and yeast, then flour and oil and salt and pepper (her secret ingredient from the restaurant recipe) and turns the mixer on. She stays right beside it because the mixer came with a warning: if anyone tries to reach in when the dough hook is going around — it goes so smoothly and slowly — they will probably die. The dough

hook will catch the person's arm and tear it off and they will bleed to death. Even though only one arm is caught and pulled out of its socket, it's not possible to reach around with the other arm, to turn off the switch, because the pain is too horrible for movement.

I was telling this to one of the kids who was watching us use the mixer, and he nodded. Yes, that's how his uncle died. He was a baker in Portugal and when the household got up one morning they found him on the floor beside his mixer, in a pool of blood, dead.

We've told the story to everyone who comes near the mixer. Some of the kids wouldn't even come in the room after that. Who needs a horror movie if you can stand at the rink kitchen door and just shudder at the mixer going around? And yet, the sound of it is wonderful to us. Jacqueline can stand right beside it and let it work the dough while she cuts up peppers and sausage and onions and mushrooms, gets out the pizza sauce and puts corn meal on the wooden peels. Once the dough is mixed she puts it in a huge bowl and covers it with a damp cloth. She attends to the boys, runs out and checks the fire, runs back in and punches the dough down, rolls it out, puts it on the wooden peels, and attends to the boys again. Meantime people come by the kitchen/office and ask her, what are you doing there? When she has time, she answers. But already people are asking, is it almost time for the pizza to be done? So Jacqueline spreads the tomato sauce, and sprinkles the cheese, and puts on the toppings, and drizzles the olive oil, and out she goes to put the first few pizzas in. Once they're in she runs back inside and grabs oven mitts and platters and the hoe that we use to move the pizzas around. Then she's back out, a quick check on the boys - "I love you too but I can't talk right now," - and then back to get the first pizzas out and put

some more in. She runs inside with the done pizzas and shoves them on the tables in the kitchen/office, cuts them up, runs off again calling out the price over her shoulder, to the rink guard who has a line of hungry people at his counter - back in again with the next pizzas, — oh no, the first ones are gone already — and into the other kitchen to get some more dough. She told me once she feels like Charlie Chaplin in his assembly line movie, and it's easy to see why.

Sometimes her kids come in and help. They're home-schooled and they know that Jacqueline has to work and they have to help sometimes; children are not allowed to be childish when their mother needs help. They're good, too, but they're young and they get bored, and eventually they set up a chess game in the other room and Jacqueline is on her own again. There are pauses, and times when there's help from other staff or skaters. But mostly it's Jacqueline's dance, choreographed by her, and with her as the principal dancer, dancing all the time.

Meantime people skate around with traces of tomato sauce on their faces. Then they go home and tell their cousins, or they invite their friends to come for the day from Mississauga, and next Sunday even more people come to the rink. Now that the holidays have started it will surely get worse. It's wonderful that so many people are rediscovering the rink, but sometimes I worry — how many more can fit?

Feb.17: An afternoon television "round about town" show has been filming an item about this unusual skating rink where you can also cook pizza. They did the inside portion of their filming last week and today they came to do the outside part, on a family Sunday, because they wanted some more bodies. So first they got some footage of the show's very blond host skating around the ice holding a pizza on a peel, smiling and talking about how much fun she

was having here at Dufferin Grove Park. Then the camera man wanted to shoot a sequence where the show's host and Jacqueline are at the bake oven putting the pizza in.

All this filming was in the middle of the usual pizza line-ups on Sunday afternoons. I had to be in the picture too, according to the producer. Just ten minutes, he promised. Afterwards I went into the rink house to help Jacqueline and usher the TV people out of there. The rink was packed with skaters just arriving, the kitchen was chaos, the trash cans were overflowing, the camera man was in everybody's way and anxious about his equipment. It was a little piece of hell.

After a while, though, the skaters got their skates laced and went outside, the TV people disappeared, and the kitchen got tidied. Jacqueline and I start to laugh and we couldn't stop. A strange pizza-rink with the very blonde TV host skating around on her very white figure skates, pointing her pizza peel toward the camera. *Surreal!*

June 26: The kick-off concert for the Dufferin Mall Summer Concert series was today, but it was rained out. The performers — a Portuguese cultural group and a Georgian choir called Darbazi (singing music from the former Soviet Republic, not the state in the U.S.) and a salsa group - came to the park anyway because for a while in late morning it looked as though it might clear up. But then the sky looked dark again and the rain fell steadily. We had the pizza oven fired up already so we thought we might as well make the performers some lunch while we waited out the rain. Half of my "youth crew" came by and we got them to help put the pizzas in the oven. As soon as they brought back the first pizzas the sky really opened, so everyone jammed into the rink house and pizzas were passed from hand to hand because no one could get near

the pizza table. The Darbazi choir formed a little circle and began singing, with a background of the drumming of the rain on the pavement outside the open doors. Two of our youth crew put on Parks Department yellow raincoats and ran outside and cooked another round of pizzas. Then the Portuguese group decided to dance, and somehow they managed to find enough room in the rink house. They had an old man who plays a squeezebox and an even older woman who sang in a strange, exotic keening voice, and all the others in the group, some of them teenagers and young children, lined up across from one another and danced, and sang at the same time. They have bright red scarves and sashes that flash when they twirl.

A few people from the neighbourhood had come over despite the rain. They lined up outside the windows, under their umbrellas, looking into the room, because that was the best way you could see the dancers. There was no room inside but it didn't matter — the dancers were dancing and singing for each other.

When they finished a piece, the Darbazi singers would start up again, and so on back and forth. The sound bounced back off the walls and was somehow further amplified by the torrents of rain. It was so extraordinary and so beautiful I thought I could die right then.

August 18: The wheat and oats and rye and buckwheat that we planted this year in the gardens beside the oven got wrecked today. A flock of sparrows flew down and ate up all the grain in one five-minute raid, leaving only bent stalks, like a bunch of feathered vandals.

I don't want to grow grain again like that. It was a bit of whimsy - let's plant some samples of grain, in honour of the bake-oven. But the grains grew very tall and took over the whole garden, and the wind

would blow through them in waves. People used to lean on the fence and stare. I had the impression they were thinking heavy thoughts. More than once I saw someone weeping, and the tears looked bitter and painful.

So I don't want to do that again. There's no reason why memories should be happy, especially when there's homesickness, and not all stories are nice. But we don't have to play with that, to test how evocative we can make the oven. It was a mistake. We didn't know how much people would take it to heart - people for whom grain once did grow right near their oven, and who for various reasons went away, or were driven away, from all that forever.

Sept.13: Tonight when I passed by the vegetable garden, an old man who always feeds the birds in the park was in the garden with two plastic bags, stealing tomatoes. I said, "don't do that. We grew those tomatoes for putting on the pizzas when the school classes come to the oven." He smiled a smile of "oh, come on," and said, "just one bag. You have so many." I said, "we need so many. Don't take one bag, not even one tomato. Buy them at the grocery store." He looked at me and frowned and suddenly shook his fist in my face and flushed red. He looked so fierce and angry that I actually thought he might hit me. But I stood my ground and he turned around and walked off. He sits outside the rink house by the hour, the picturesque bird-man with all the little sparrows pecking around his feet. Meantime in his heart he's plotting the theft of our vegetables.

Sept.21: The old man and I have glared at each other but not spoken since that day. This afternoon I was cleaning up after a school pizza-making visit, and when I went outside to put out the garbage, four

older women from the apartment building across the street were sitting on the bench in front of the rink house. We started talking and one of them showed me a photograph. It turned out the old man is her husband. The picture was of happier days, a formal family photo of a father, mother, and two teenage daughters, all of them dressed up. I found out that the old man had worked all his life on high steel construction, as a welder. He was working on the highest building in Toronto, and one day they found him dangling in mid-air from his safety harness. It seemed that he might have had a stroke while he was sitting on the steel beam. He couldn't remember anything about it. His mind was never all there after that, his wife said, and sometimes he became irrationally angry. He never worked again.

I waited for a few days and then I tried to catch the old man's eye as he sat on his usual bench waiting for the birds to come. When he looked at me I nodded and smiled slightly. He smiled too. Since then we've waved and smiled, no more clenched fist from him, no more scowls from me. I took this whole thing so seriously — a tomato thief. What a dope I was.

Dec.20: David Anderson brought his giant-puppet troupe here to have their dress rehearsal for their winter solstice parade downtown tomorrow. Last week we put up signs to invite people for "the night before solstice," and today in the late afternoon,

when darkness was already falling, we made a large bonfire near the oven. We put up our yellow tipi, too, just to attract attention, and made some giant pots of hot cider at a smaller campfire.

Across the street the parking lot of the mall was jammed with Christmas shoppers, none of them with time to spare for a medieval ritual of the rebirth of spring out of the darkest day of winter. At this time in December you can almost see an electric charge over the mall, the last-minute shopping is so intense, so desperate.

About a hundred people came and watched the performance of "The Green Man," drum rolls, figure of death, dragon and all. It's a contemporary mummer's play, and the little kids looked a bit daunted by the giant puppets silhouetted against the huge flames of the fire. We baked bread in the oven and cut it as it came out. The slices were steaming in the cold. After the play was over, everyone was eating hot bread and talking at once. Even the little kids were smiling, now that the play was over and the dragon was clowning around with them. Across the street there were long lines of car lights, streaks of yellow light and red, cars bumper to bumper, entering the mall parking lot, illuminating the solstice over there. They have immensely greater candle-power than a solstice bonfire, but maybe less warmth all the same. At least, when I looked over, it made me shiver.



Afterword : street-food carts

When the city of Toronto was forced, by provincial edict, to amalgamate with its neighbouring municipalities in 1997, the city councillors gave out a few last-minute grants as they were clearing their desks. The “Friends of Dufferin Grove Park” got a surprise cheque for a proposal that had been previously rejected: to develop a prototype of a street-food cart that would be both cheap for a handyman to build and easy to keep sanitary for serving food. Commercial food carts used by the city’s licensed hot dog vendors are entirely made of stainless steel and very expensive. But Toronto is full of people from other countries who have street food experience but little capital to get started. We wanted to know: is there a cheaper version of a safe food cart? Now, start-up costs are not the only problems facing street food vendors. They also have no legal permission to sell anything other than hot dogs in public space. **Ontario law says hot dogs are the only “food substance” that’s safe to sell from street carts.**

Common sense suggests that calling hot dogs a safe food is a stretch. Given a choice, many citizens would pick a different dinner. And they can buy whatever they like, a great variety of prepared foods, at restaurants or in the deli sections of food stores. But as long as the hot dog law is in force, people strolling along the street, or sitting on a park bench, will be deprived of the different foods that can be made in the open air.

Under the restriction of such a narrow law, how can the gifts of ordinary street-food cooks get a chance to manifest themselves? The answer, in Toronto, is connected with outdoor festivals. Because Toronto is so diverse in its people, and because our city councillors long ago made provisions for allowing ethnic festivals of all

kinds, at these festivals the rule of hot dogs has given way. Citizens have seen and tasted for themselves what a wonderful range of foods can come from a food cart grill, and how ingenious the cooking arrangements can be when variation is permitted.

When the festivals are over, street food reverts to hot dogs. But the cat is out of the bag: we know there’s something missing. The riddle is, how to get the missing gifts of ordinary people – in this case, of street-food cooks, some of them new to the city and without much money – out into public space.

In order to figure out this riddle, one has to experiment. Yet when our laws prescribe precisely how the world must be, it’s hard to try new things. Still, what choice do we have? So in our park we asked Alan Carlisle, a carpenter who likes to solve problems, to take the city’s unexpected grant and fiddle around with bits of scrap plywood (cheap), sheets of stainless steel (sanitary when kept clean), and bicycle wheels. I had been part of an Ontario government investigation into food regulations a few years before, as an interested “consumer,” so I had some idea of the rules, and their rationale. Alan and I put our heads together, and he went to work in the rink house garage.

The cart Alan built cost under \$1000, counting stainless steel insert, water bottle, refrigeration chests, umbrella, and cooking equipment. At that time the cost of a commercial stainless steel cart was around \$6000.

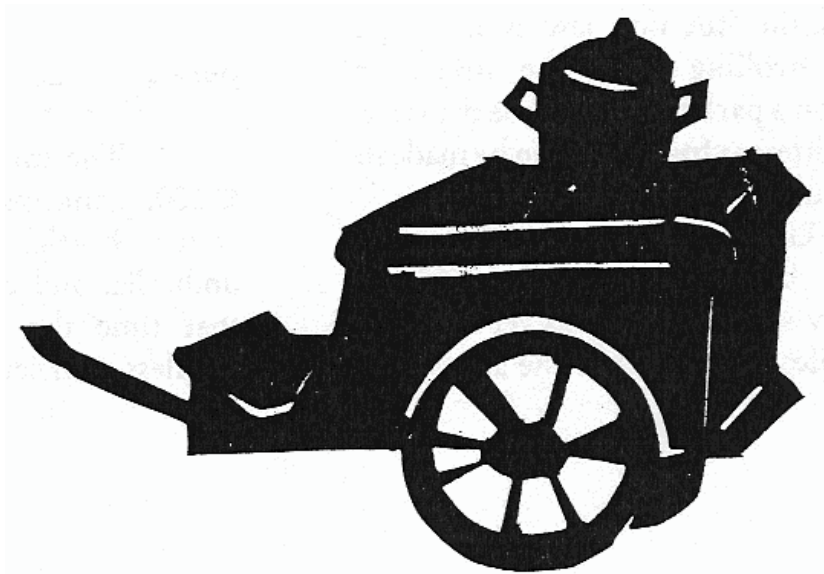
We began to use our new cart at festivals and within the park. Because most of us are amateurs at selling food, some of our efforts were clean but ungraceful. Making food under the open sky, without a house at your back, presents some tricky problems.

Street food cooks of all kinds have developed simple solutions, worked out over time. Their food had to look tasty, and it had to be clean. Presumably an old-time food seller who made her customers sick, lost a lot of her customers, one or two through (maybe fatal) illness, and the rest through word-of-mouth: “don’t go to her, she’ll make you sick.” So there must have always been an incentive to be safe. But when there is a long break in street food selling, some important details will be forgotten. That’s dangerous. So now if we want to put good food back into outdoor public space like streets and parks, we have to be smart and careful, and invent the most fitting arrangements for us.

The stakes are high, but so are the rewards: to have another channel for the gifts of a multiplicity of good cooks, allowing them to make a living and enliven their neighbourhoods at the same time.

Which brings us back to our park. One wonderful thing about a public park is that the people who own the park – i.e. everyone – can *try things* on a small scale. Another wonderful thing is that there are no walls, so anyone can see these experiments, and can give their opinion, and then go on and tell other people what they saw. The park food cart is then a public experiment.

We know that food often gathers people together and sometimes gives them a chance for pleasure and celebration. Cooking with fire (of one kind or another, even a gas flame) on a food cart is another version of what we’ve been trying here. We’re not very experienced, but we’re looking to learn. One thing we’re wondering is whether it’s possible to set up a summertime organic food cart that serves nothing grown further away than 50 miles, or harvested longer than a day ago. Could food-cart vendors make such beautiful vegetable dishes that our legislators will have to change the laws protecting hot dogs? And if we can’t figure out, on our own, how to set this up here at our park, is there someone else who can teach us and others? That’s the interesting, suspenseful question at the end of this booklet. Street food vendors, outdoor bread bakers, purveyors of good open-air food for ordinary people, *we want to know who you are*. Please get in touch. You can reach us at the park at 416/392-0913. Leave a message. Or contact us at vendors@dufferinpark.ca. We’re looking forward to hearing from you. If you decide to come by the park, call ahead; we don’t want to miss you when you come. We’ll put a fire in the oven.



Cooking fires in our park: a partial cast of characters

At the outset, there were three neighbours: **Robin Craig, Dawne McFarlane,** and **Jutta Mason,** who thought something could happen in the park. Over seven years, three people multiplied into this partial list of others who mixed their fingers in a little or a lot:

Ann Hattori: citizen, park user, mother of three small pizza makers at the oven, who was moving to a different neighbourhood and asked me: “how can I get an oven built in my new park?” This booklet is an answer, dedicated to Ann. **Lily Weston:** park staff until recently, choreographer of pizza days, co-ordinator of everything else. **Margie Rutledge:** the first where-the-buck-stops park staff, an adventurer whose thoughts and deeds shaped much of what followed; now a children’s writer. **Elyse Pomeranz:** the original art lady, who showed that felt-making, rug-hooking, Japanese braiding, beadwork, mask-making, metalwork, and candle-making were just the thing for children who come to a park looking for adventure; now a teacher. **Annon Buchbinder:** film-maker, who filmed a tribute to our park and to his wife Elyse, a film that made our ordinary park look like a kind of paradise. **Jacqueline Peeters:** dancer, then pizza cook and campfire lady in the park, then lawyer. **Jann, Luc,** and **Sean:** who were the pizza cook’s helpers. **Jane Jacobs:** writer; who was never in the park in person but whose formulation “eyes on the street” worked so well for us as “eyes on the park” that she might as well have been in right there in the park too. **Geoffrey Parkin:** dog-walker in the park, supporter and protector of our first oven-building. **Joe Longo:** grocer; his family runs a neighbourhood grocery where you can never shop fast because you always meet neighbours there; he delivered the materials for the park bread and pizza, by the sackful, the bucketful, the barrelful, in any weather. **Makeda Lewis:** student and park worker; she could make six pizzas at once and still remember whose pizzas they were, and then six more, and six more, and so on. **Patti Kelly:** student and trainer; she harvested the potatoes for roasting in the oven, because she was Irish, and she was the boss of the “really-bad-kids” youth crew. **Denzil Joyette:** chef, park worker and basketball player; who worked at the pizza oven and the food cart and was the favourite friend of the stilt-walker kids. **Jason Abreu:** carpenter, park staff and pizza maker; a pizza slice fell on his foot and burned it so badly we planted the aloe plant for the next time. **Jason Sampaio:** troublemaker in many crafty, ingenious ways; he taught us to be so much quicker; once put up some cup hooks in the park kitchen and cased the joint at the same time. **Fabio Tavares:** an inventor of the park; fertile mind, good cook at campfires; leader of kids and grown-ups at the park from age 8. **Rafael Tavares:** Fabio’s older brother, frequently playing hooky from school, first-rate campfire cook from age 12. **David Miller:** jack-of-all-trades, pastry cook, oven-building assistant. **Nigel Dean:** contractor, oven-builder, drummer in a band, advisor and philosopher about the world going by the oven. **Tino DeCastro:** supervisor of two community centres, one pool, four rinks, three ovens; from Madeira; not very good at bureaucracy or putting up blocks. **Glen Sharp:** area supervisor of parks, suffered through all the groundbreaking at the beginning, matchmaker of the fire permit. **Ted Scovell:** Fire Prevention Chief; wears a gold earring; helped us get our fire permit. **Jim Caldwell:** subsequent area supervisor of parks; told us the oven was a good idea and then went away on holidays. **Carol Cormier:** park area manager; lukewarm at the start, friend at the end, donator of the oven-gardens rosebushes. **Mike Hindle:** park supervisor for our park and many others; specializes in saying no and meaning yes, source of many helpful contributions to the park. **Bill Argeropolous:** park foreman, finder of forgotten benches, encourager; but always comparing park cooking unfavorably to meals cooked by his wife.

Vincenzo Pietropaulo: photographer and chronicler of daily life; author of an 11-page article about the park that got us many more friends for the oven. **Arie Kemp:** retired Dutchman, self-appointed head gardener who never works on Sundays and never stops the other six days, seed man, cyclist, stubborn debater, constant reader. **Gene Threndyle:** landscaper, planter and advisor for all native species gardens; artist and fountain-builder. **Lt.Gov.Hilary Weston:** Queen's representative; wife of owner of huge bread-making multinational, presenter of awards and maker of pizza at the oven. **Judy Broadbent:** common-sense philanthropist; giver of oven bricks and mortar, writer of friendly letters. **Pat MacKay:** activist, gardener, advisor, match-maker, donor of tulip and daffodil bulbs, frequent helper in times of trouble. **Fiona Knight:** funding officer for the Child Nutrition Program; who shocked us by saying she cried when she saw Ami's film of the park, and shocked us again by saying we could build the oven with help from their grant money. **Bruce MacDougall** and **Julie White:** staff of the Trillium Foundation; who together helped us get the rest of the funding we needed, but oh it was painful. **John Sewell:** writer and former mayor of Toronto, matchmaker, man of real kindness, who bought some bread from the oven and called us the next day with a fantastic surprise. (Can't say what it was.)

Barbara Hall: when mayor of Toronto, came to the park to open the oven; never forgets a name; friend to Fabio whenever she saw him; complimenter to Isabel at the cooking fire, teller of tales about the park cooking-fires at meetings all over the world. **John Benningen:** chef; dreamer; says he discovered the oven when he ran into it trying to catch a frisbee; periodic campfire-and-oven cook at the park as an alternative to cooking for rich people. **Nelson Barreira:** recreation staff, jack-of-all-trades; fixer of all broken things; special friend to youth, campfire cook and bench maker. **Mario Zanetti:** director of Parks and Recreation; advisor and enabler at the beginning and the middle, taught us: "start small and use the rules against themselves;" a crucial park friend who eventually vanished into the meeting-world. **Hussain Ali:** small factory-owner, donor of the oven wood, friend of good causes. **Lisa Shizgal:** artist, adventurer, painter of pictures on fences and archways, lighter of the first oven fire. **Elizabeth Meyer-Renschhausen:** historian from Berlin, bread scholar, teacher of organic lore, visitor to the park. **Jan Schallert:** baker, Slavicist, baking teacher, experimenter, maker of park cinnamon buns. **Wendy Trussler:** artist, baker, camp cook, collector of iron oven parts; Dutch-oven baking teacher at the park. **Alan Carlisle:** carpenter, inventor, builder of the park food cart. **Allan Merowitz:** musician, director and actor for the "Jewish Wedding" that was a feast and a dance at the park, bread lover. **Ann Bayly:** baker from Georgian Bay, adventurer, cousin, came to show us how to bake, brought Quita with her. **Quita Jane Burns,** clay-oven builder and baker, inspired teacher, came to show us how to bake in a wood-fired oven, came back again to bake again. **Leslie Coates:** landscape architect, booster of our park, passed tales about the oven all over North America. **David Anderson:** theatre director and producer (Clay and Paper), jokester, insisted on bread at every performance. **Nyron Sookraj:** manager of the Catholic Children's Aid Society, Dufferin Mall office; accepted money on our behalf, made no red tape, said it all looked good to him. **Maria Luberto:** assistant to Nyron, repeatedly helped us to find him, to find mislaid letters, and to find the financial officer. **Larry Lewis:** musician, playwright, wrote the Legend of Fornax (goddess of bake ovens) and many other park plays, put music into the park, also baked bread. **Jane LowBeer:** artist, giver of gifts, portraitist of the oven and the park. **Bruno Torres:** park volunteer, later staff, pizza maker, finder of hidden nails. **Jim Kuellmer:** carpenter, inventor, baker, compost expert, lent us our first grain mill, advised us about bread and mills. **Jan MacKie:** leader of the Spiral Garden, sets standards for what is possible in outdoor urban space; baker, sponsor of the beaver oven, teacher of child bakers. **Richard Boehnke:** public health

consultant, jokester, of Mennonite descent and understands bake ovens, not inclined to block through bureaucracy. **Kathryn Walsh Kuitenbrower:** writer, baker, desem sourdough teacher at the park; moved back to the city from the farm and found her oven was waiting for her in the park. **Donna Bartolini:** formerly head of *Canadian Living Magazine*'s test kitchen, experimenter, baking teacher at the park, baker of good bread in blizzards (at the park). **Cavan Young:** musician, actor, twilight drummer in the park, producer of outdoor events, organized the park Sunday concerts by the bake oven. **Alan Gasser:** director of Darbazi Choir, singer by the bread oven, bread lover. **Isabel Perez:** cook, birth attendant, street food seller from Guatemala City, park campfire lady. **Crescence Krueger:** actress, birth attendant, campfire partner for Isabel. **Mario Silva:** city councillor, unofficial Portuguese representative, sponsor of park festival and flea market by the oven. **Ulla Lachauer:** German film-maker and biographer, visitor to the oven, sent us the photograph of the unused bake oven in Mannheim park. **Nils Christie:** Norwegian criminologist, writer of the classic guide for citizens on criminal acts "Conflict as Property," visitor to the park, advisor and guide for our approach to vandalism. **Jamie Kennedy:** chef and restaurateur, testified for us at the Ontario Government's food regulation hearings, and told them that street food sellers should be allowed to "strut their stuff" in their neighbourhoods. **Regina Gudelis:** Parks Forestry supervisor, purveyor of firewood. **Daniel Cayley:** park worker, pioneer on the food cart. **Krow Fischer:** organic farmer, communitarian, teacher of corn roasts and food in parks. **Nadeem Soumah:** film-making student, basketball player, park staff, pizza maker, lover of hip hop and Mozart. **Sam Wong:** basketball player, campfire cook, park odd jobs worker, social organizer. **Krista Fry:** chef, dancer, early baker at the oven. **Ben Mitchell:** student, park staff, baker of twenty loaves at a time, pizza cook at the oven. **Bruce Lyne:** film set builder, campfire cook, person who stops beatings. **Annick Mitchell:** professor, sets standards of baking and gardening in the park, lives in the house right beside. **Winston Abernethy:** bicycle mechanic, activist, baker, hooked up our food cart to a special adapted bicycle. **Charlotte Elder:** park friend, taught us what a good campfire can do. **Heidi Bechmann:** retired social worker, taught us what is necessary picnic equipment, told us about plum cake in neighbourhood ovens in Berlin. **David Cayley:** broadcaster, writer, husband and long-term supporter of Jutta, made a radio series called "Community and its Counterfeits" that sold a lot of transcripts. **Joe Commodore:** teacher with tattoos on his arm, baker, from Sicily; taught us about bringing school classes to the oven. **Jane Price:** lawyer, president of Friends of Dufferin Grove Park, iconoclast from Calgary, fellow-sufferer of funding applications. **Alan Scott:** oven designer and builder from Australia, visiting leader of our second oven workshop, desem sourdough baker. **Marc Sullivan:** gave his time and some starter hints for the design of this booklet. **The Geoffrey H. Wood Foundation:** called up early one morning to say they would give us an unexpected grant, which helped pay for producing this booklet. **Sheena and Dr. Dan Banks, Peter, Ann, Tim, Dennis and baby Daniel Banks:** came from West Virginia for one year, neighbours to the park, taught us the freedom and enjoyment that one big Catholic family with five spunky children can have in an inner-city park that works. Taught us that it's the people who make all the difference. **Johanne DeCastro:** who landed in our park when Lily left, and hit the ground running, quickly learning everything she could about the oven and starting right away to teach others. **Marcel, Donnalessa, Amelia, Anita, Manny, Kuma, Nelson:** all learning how to run the new community oven in Christie Pits Park, as this booklet went to print. A whole new beginning



