



The First 25 Years of Fishers' Loft Inn
TAKING A CHANCE

AN URBAN TO RURAL JOURNEY • 80+ INN RECIPES

John & Peggy Fisher
and Roger Pickavance

Foreword by
Dame
Judi Dench

The scarecrow in the Fishers' Loft Inn kitchen garden looks out over the Cove in Port Rexton.



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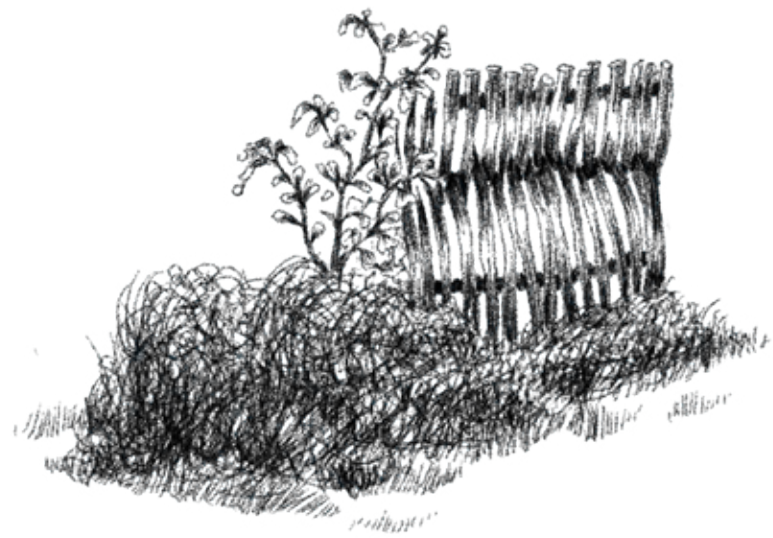
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is impossible for us to thank the many friends and neighbours, staff, businesses, artists, and family members who—since we launched our Port Rexton lives and began building Fishers' Loft Inn—have shared with us their local knowledge and expertise, as well as their warmth, insights, and good humour. After 25 years their number is legion, the list of names too long to enumerate here. But we want to express how deeply grateful we are to all who have helped us over the years. We have been touched by and will always remember and appreciate your support.



Full moon over the Inn's Main House.





The Cove, Port Rexton, Newfoundland

FOREWORD

Dame Judi Dench, CH, DBE, FRSA

I knew little of Newfoundland until we made *The Shipping News*, a feature film set in Newfoundland and based on the novel by Annie Proulx.

Newfoundland is a ruggedly beautiful island just east of mainland Canada in the North Atlantic Ocean. It is sparsely populated and delightfully free of crowds. Newfoundland is the way I imagine England to have been a hundred years ago.

Some 500 years ago, in the time of Elizabeth I and Shakespeare, fishermen from England's West Country and Ireland discovered Newfoundland's bountiful fishing grounds. You can still hear echoes today of accents from England's West Country and Ireland of the 1700s. There are some who say the present-day dialect of rural Newfoundland is reminiscent of speech in the time of Shakespeare.

During my stay at Fishers' Loft Inn, I was struck by the warmth of the Newfoundlanders who worked there, all descended from fishing families. Small isolated communities, called outports, still dot the coast as close as possible to inshore fishing grounds. In my spare time, I enjoyed being in the Inn's kitchen, helping make French bread and running the dishwasher alongside cook, Helen.

Peggy and John, who built Fishers' Loft Inn, told me they had decided to give up the frenetic pace of city life for a quiet rural place where neighbours know each other and a sense of community prevails. They discovered Port Rexton and thought it would be good for them and good for their young sons to simply move there.

And over time they built an inn, a collection of houses in traditional styles on a windswept hillside overlooking Trinity Bay and beyond to the North Atlantic. They adopted a singular approach to inn-keeping—one that values place and people.

I was so pleased to be asked to add a few words to this book celebrating 25 years of Fishers' Loft Inn. It's the story of a family and a leap-of-faith move to a rural community. I look back very fondly on my time at Fishers' Loft Inn by the sea. I'm sure you will, too, whether you visit it in person or through the pages of this book.

Judi Dench



BARBARA DORAN

The filmmaker in her
Port Rexton home.



Barbara Doran is an original. A warm, generous person driven by an inexhaustible reservoir of energy and a deeply probing mind, she is a hilarious storyteller (almost always at her own expense) and known as much for effortlessly throwing dinner parties for any number of people as she is for conceiving and launching documentaries and dramatic feature films.

Her impressive career in film traces its roots to a job killing rats in a university laboratory. A professor recognized Barbara as a struggling single mother of two, perhaps in need of a bit of help. He insisted on driving her to a meeting of academics committed to women's equality. Looking back, Barbara says she was "scared out her wits" at the prospect of meeting such accomplished women. But feminism and this group of academics became a watershed in Barbara's life. With new-found confidence she embraced the world of social justice.

Over time, the group successfully lobbied Memorial University to establish a Women's Studies program. Barbara enrolled and three years later was its first graduate. The National Film Board of Canada invited her to Montreal to join Studio D, the world's first publicly funded feminist film studio, to research a series of documentaries about women who had left abusive partners.

In Quebec, Barbara quickly became conversant in French. She was part of a documentary film company with three other women. She went on to make 34 documentaries about child sexual abuse, sweatshops in Guatemala, women prisoners in Pakistan, AIDS in South Africa, serial killers, and the horrors of the First World War.

In 1992, Newfoundland author Bernice Morgan gave Barbara a copy of her historical novel *Random Passage*, which is set in a Newfoundland fishing station around 1830. Bernice inscribed her book "To Barb with high

hopes." Sometime later, on a beach holiday, Barbara started to read it. At page 30, "crying my eyes out," she ran to a telephone booth, called the publisher, and secured the film rights.

Random Passage, in Barbara's words, "was about who we are, why we came here and what kept us here. It wasn't just about the fish. It was about community, about looking after each other, it's about survival, joy and love. I had to tell this story."

Persistence, fuelled by unrelenting belief, is what it takes to produce films. It took ten years to convince the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to commit \$14 million to produce and broadcast *Random Passage* nationally and internationally. It was filmed on a location not far from Port Rexton.

A year later, Hollywood arrived on the Bonavista Peninsula with a phalanx of stars and crew to shoot Annie Proulx's international best-selling book *The Shipping News*—complete with a Hollywood-sized budget. As with *Random Passage*, the project needed accommodations for cast and crew, logistics and services, and locations unique to Newfoundland.

The filming of *Random Passage* was pivotal in bringing *The Shipping News* to the area. Barbara had demonstrated that movies could be filmed in rural Newfoundland. She and others followed with production budgets totalling more than \$60 million, providing work for local residents hard hit by the cod moratorium.

Barbara, a once-timid single mother of two, has now won numerous awards for her work in film and contributions to the community, including an honorary Doctorate from Memorial University of Newfoundland. Her children, Sean and Erin, have taken a cue from her and also work in film.



INTRODUCTION TO THE RECIPES

Roger Pickavance

As Peggy and I thought about the challenges of creating a dining room for the Inn, our friend Roger Pickavance—a skilled cook and former restaurateur—generously shared his expertise and insights. Now the author of several cookbooks, he continued his advisory role as we chose the recipes for this book.

– John Fisher

I grew up on the Welsh Borders with a profound love for the freshest and best of local produce, which my extended family of gardeners grew in abundance. Since then, all fruits and vegetables in my life have been measured against those yardsticks of perfection. I can still recall, for example, the exact taste of my grandfather's tomatoes: an harmonious balance of acid and sweet with a deep, subtle, and perfectly—how else can one put it—*tomatoey* flavour.

But I learned almost nothing about cooking during that time, so whatever culinary skills I do possess were acquired subsequently. Like many people, my first attempts at being a cook were out of necessity, in my undergraduate days when money was tight and cooking for oneself was the only way to survive. But then I got hooked by food and by cooking, and I have spent the rest of my life exploring and learning about both.

My arrival in Newfoundland was a turning point in my culinary education because I was presented with both difficulties and opportunities. On one hand, I was faced with significant challenges: all lettuce was iceberg at that time, lemons were scarce (as was garlic), and the less said about the so-called tomatoes the better.

On the other hand, the opportunities were immense and far outweighed the difficulties. I discovered the delights of partridgeberries (lingonberries) and was amazed that I could pick all I wanted on the outskirts of a major city. I was immensely pleased by the abundance not only of wild fruit I was familiar with, such as blueberries, but also wild fruit I had never heard of, including squashberries and marshberries. I was astounded that, in season, fresh wild Atlantic salmon was so easily available. And the lobster! What had been an unimaginable luxury



Slate steps lead to the Yellow House and Main House.

in my boyhood was now being hawked on street corners in the city at unbelievably (to my eyes at least) low prices.

Eventually I met John and Peggy and was delighted to offer what help I could to their burgeoning enterprise. And that led to my participation in this book.

The recipes on the following pages are presented in the sequence—more or less—that guests at the Inn usually meet them. That is, breakfast recipes appear first, then the courses of dinner in the order they go to the table: bread, soup or other appetizer, salad, main, and finally dessert. We've also included recipes for tea-time refreshments, which guests may encounter at various times throughout the day. There are no recipes for lunch, a meal typically not offered at the Inn because almost all guests are out exploring the area during the day.

As this book outlines, Fishers' Loft Inn started life as a bed and breakfast where only breakfast was served. The style of that meal was established in those early days and has persisted to now. But when that bed and breakfast evolved into an inn, a dinner service was necessary. Although there would be white tablecloths, the Inn was not going to be a grandiose "fine dining" establishment. Instead, the emphasis would be on fresh, simple, and local—and on seafood in particular. To streamline things in the kitchen, a fixed menu (with limited alternatives) was planned, served at two sittings—and that's how it's been to the present day.

The recipes we've included in this book cover the majority of dishes served at the Inn. Their origins are many and various. If the original source is known, it is acknowledged in the text. Many of them, however, have simply evolved from sources lost in time and so are of unknown provenance (or at least unknown to us). We apologize in advance for any attributions we may have missed. I introduced some—but by no means all—of the unattributed recipes to the Inn but have chosen not to acknowledge these in the text. A few of the adaptations from original sources can be traced to me, as well; other adjustments have been made over time by the Inn's kitchen staff and the visiting consulting chefs.

On a busy day in high season at the Inn there can be 40 to 60 guests for breakfast and dinner. I have scaled down many of the recipes for use at home to feed four or six people and I tested all the reduced recipes to make sure they work. But apart from that, they are reported as they are made at the Inn. Any eccentricities you may spot in the recipes have quite deliberately not been ironed out, because that's how it's done at the Inn.

For writers of recipe books, measurements are always contentious, and here particularly so because readers of this book will have differing styles of measuring. So rather than sticking rigidly to one system, we chose to express ingredient quantities in a hybrid fashion. While being comprehensible to a global audience, our approach is primarily aimed at the kitchens of Canadians and Americans who form the majority of guests at the Inn.

CONSULTING CHEFS

These are the five consulting chefs who, along with Roger Pickavance, have worked with the kitchen staff at Fishers' Loft Inn.



Bob Arniel

Born in Ontario, Bob has lived and worked in St. John's for most of his professional life. He holds a Bachelor of Vocational Education Degree and is a certified Chef de Cuisine (the highest Canadian certification). Bob launched Chef To Go, a teaching and catering business in downtown St. John's, in 1995. In 2009 he was awarded the Edna, a lifetime achievement award from Cuisine Canada for work in promoting local regional cuisine.



Laura Duchow

Laura was a consulting chef at Fishers' Loft Inn from 2012 to 2015. Trained in Professional Cooking and Contemporary Cuisine at the Pearson School of Culinary Arts (Lasalle, Quebec), she has been attached to several Montreal restaurants. Laura has now left working fulltime as a chef (she continues private chef duties) and is training to be an interior designer at Dawson College in Montreal.



Todd Perrin

Todd counts himself fortunate to have been cooking professionally in Newfoundland and Labrador since returning here from Europe in 1999. He worked with several restaurants and properties around the province in the following years—including Fishers' Loft Inn. Then, a decade ago, he opened his own restaurant, Mallard Cottage, in a heritage house in Quidi Vidi, St. John's. That restaurant was a launch pad and Todd's team went on to create The Inn by Mallard Cottage, a seven-room inn nearby, as well as Waterwest Kitchen & Meats, a butcher shop, bakery, specialty food shop, deli, and restaurant on the west end of Water Street in St. John's.



Paul Templeton

Born and raised in St. John's, with deeper roots in Port Rexton, Paul has worked for more than a decade in the food and hospitality industry. He is passionate about fresh food and all things wild—and loves to cook outdoors. His cooking career began in British Columbia and he now travels to cook wherever he can—including on the salmon rivers of Labrador.



David Tombs

David took a circuitous route to get to food, studying economics, business management, and Japanese language before taking chef training at Dubrulle Culinary School in Vancouver. His celebrated Terra Restaurant was a highlight of the Kamloops, B.C., dining scene from 2011 to 2020. During his earlier posting as Sous Chef responsible for the Cabot Club Restaurant at the Fairmont Hotel Newfoundland in St. John's, David would eagerly await his weekend escapes from the busy hotel and city life for the opportunity to create and share intimate meals for guests and staff at Fishers' Loft. David is now the Executive Chef at Black Rock Resort in Ucluelet, B.C.

Fishers' Loft Inn has always been a place of inspiration for me. There is a distinct calm that settles into me when I spend time there, as a chef and a friend. I'm not sure if it's the view, the quiet, or the ocean breeze, but time seems to slow in Port Rexton. I find myself drawn towards delicate recipes, slow and gentle like the surroundings. A light poach over a hard sear, steamed rather than fried, aromatic broths as opposed to heavy sauce.

– Paul Templeton



It is not known whether Ian White's ancestors frequented the Red Lion coffeehouse in Poole, Dorset, before shipping out for the New World, but they did hail from England's West Country and arrived in Trinity in the 1700s. Two centuries later, their descendant Ian founded a small-batch coffee roaster in his hometown, and named it the Trinity Coffee Company. At breakfast and dinner, guests at the Inn can savour the unique roasted blend that Ian designed for us.

Peter Lewis painting the view out to Fox Island.



THE INN'S COMMITMENT TO THE ARTS

In 1970, I visited The Guild Inn. Perched on the Scarborough Bluffs high above Lake Ontario on the eastern extremities of Toronto, it was once an artists' colony. Faux Greek columns and classical facades, rescued from Toronto buildings slated for demolition, were scattered randomly about the property's expansive grounds. The overall effect was of a peaceful reassuring place far removed from the frenetic pace of the encroaching city. The experience remained forever in my mind, long before Peggy and I ever thought of building an inn. Art and hospitality, I remember thinking, are a good fit.

The arts have been a constant thread in both of our lives. Peggy's dad, George Johnston, was a poet, a translator of Icelandic sagas, and a professor of English. At university, Peggy studied Art History. In my earlier working life, I dabbled in documentary filmmaking and managed a professional theatre company in Toronto. As I've mentioned, Peggy and I repurposed a Victorian courthouse into a bilingual two-stage theatre venue.

Newfoundland's artists are celebrated across Canada for their prodigious creative output, not unlike that other North Atlantic island, Iceland. Fishers' Loft Inn has a vibrant two-way relationship with art and artists. We give back to the arts.

We exhibit paintings and photographs by various artists in all the Inn's public spaces, rooms, and suites. Almost all of this work is for sale. The Inn

benefits from the aesthetics of the art on the walls, and the artists retain all of the proceeds from sales of their work.

We also occasionally invite artists to a residency at the Inn. Sculptor Christina Nick demonstrated her art in 2014. She created a remarkable likeness of a moose on the Inn property that now overlooks the labyrinth. She said of the experience:

I had a limited amount of time so most everything was in place for me to start working ... a temporary tent structure where I could weld out of the rain and the basic materials that I needed ... A beautiful pair of antlers was donated by a local hunter ... The moose can be seen from most viewpoints at the Inn.

Newfoundland and Labrador writers and publishers also partner with the Inn, through a reading series offered each season. Copies of authors' books are sold at these events and also in the Inn's book and craft shop.

Literary journals provide young and emerging writers with an opportunity to have their work published and recognized. Yann Martel and Michael Crummey are among the many internationally recognized writers who first published in a literary journal. *Riddle Fence* is Newfoundland and Labrador's literary journal. Fishers' Loft Inn partnered with the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador and

others to put that journal on a sustainable footing with Mark Callanan, a Newfoundland poet and writer, as the founding Managing Editor.

Similarly, Business and Arts Newfoundland and Labrador was initiated by Fishers' Loft Inn, working with volunteers and funding agencies. The purpose of this not-for-profit is to bring the worlds of business and arts to a greater understanding of each other.

Selfishly, we really couldn't see ourselves living without the arts and artists close to hand, and so we incorporated them at the heart of the Inn. Thank goodness we did—the success of our business owes much to this commitment.



Sculptor Christina Nick embracing her creation.



These are a few of the projects and events that the Inn has supported over the years.

You are invited to an
OPERA BRUNCH
 Come and enjoy an elegant brunch with
 exquisite musical moments
Sunday June 23rd 11:30 - 1:00



A fundraising event (\$100/ticket)
 co-chairs: Lynn Spracklin & John O'Dea
 *Ticket includes brunch at Fishers' Loft Conference Centre
 followed by
The Magic Flute
 at the Garrick Theatre at 2:30 in Bonavista
 Tickets: 709.468.5777
 or online www.garricktheatre.com
 all proceeds to the Garrick Theatre in support of
 Opera on the Avalon



Frank Lapointe
Addressing The Elements - Recent Watercolours
 Fishers' Loft Conference Centre
 Open to public daily, 10:00am - 6:00pm
 Opening Reception June 30th, 5:00pm - 6:30pm
 ~all paintings are for sale~

FISHERS' LOFT



Newfoundland and Labrador's literary journal.



Public piano, one of many throughout the province.



The labyrinth at Fishers' Loft Inn was designed and built in 2013 by David Goff Eveleigh, a multi-media arts practitioner and theatre director based in Wales. As far as we know, it's the only racing labyrinth in North America. It is designed so two runners can start at the same time, run to the centre on different routes, and then race out again. Many of our guests simply take a leisurely contemplative stroll—more in line with a labyrinth's traditional meditative purpose. The worn footpath is a true testament to how often the labyrinth is used.

SOUPS

Soups, particularly vegetable soups, are by far the most frequent first course of dinner at the Inn. During the season, we are blessed with excellent vegetables from our gardens and local producers. But some things, red peppers for example, are not (yet) grown at the Inn and are rarely grown commercially in Newfoundland. So, inevitably, at certain times of year and for specific ingredients, we turn to local supermarkets.

106	Notes on Making Soup
107	Beet
107	Broccoli and Spinach
108	Carrot and Ginger
109	Cauliflower and Blue Cheese
110	Gazpacho
111	Hot and Sour Soup with Shrimp
112	Leek and Potato
113	Mixed Mushroom
114	Roasted Celeriac
115	Roasted Parsnip
116	Roasted Red Pepper
117	Roasted Squash
119	Snow Pea
120	Sorrel
121	Spring Herb
121	Zucchini and Dill



Beet Soup



Snow Pea Soup

Serves 4 to 6

¾ cup (100 grams) finely chopped leek
⅓ cup (50 grams) finely chopped celery
2 tablespoons butter
4 cups (400 grams) halved (crosswise) snow peas
4 cups stock plus extra for thinning
1 teaspoon salt
1¼ cups (150 grams) green peas, fresh or frozen
1 tablespoon whipping cream (optional)

Garnish

6 sprigs of mint or parsley
6 tablespoons sour cream

Blending this soup takes longer than most, because the snow pea strings and pods clog the blender blades. Clear them as necessary.

Sweat the leek and celery in the butter on a low heat in a covered saucepan, about 20 minutes or until very soft.

Add the snow peas, stock, and salt. Bring to a boil, then simmer, covered, about 10 minutes.

Add the green peas and continue cooking another 10 minutes, covered, for a total simmering time of about 20 minutes.

Thoroughly blend the soup.

Pass the blended soup through a sieve. Discard the strings and bits of pod left behind.

Thin with more stock, to your preference. Taste and adjust the seasoning.

Add the cream—it's not essential, but a tablespoon in the whole batch does bring it together.

To serve, reheat the soup and garnish each bowl with a sprig of mint or parsley and/or a tablespoon of sour cream.



Will Gill's *The Green Chair* was part of the first Bonavista Biennale in 2017. A unique biennial exhibition of contemporary visual art held in several coastal communities on the Bonavista Peninsula, the event presents work by artists from Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, and the world.



Rhiannon Morgan making a cocktail in the Inn bar.



The dining room wraps around two sides of the bar and living room area of the Main House.

In 1989, we bought a house overlooking the ocean in the Newfoundland outport of Port Rexton, Trinity Bay—a place we had barely heard of, let alone lived in.

Thus begins the story of how John and Peggy Fisher took a chance that changed their lives and made an indelible mark on the place they adopted as home—Newfoundland.

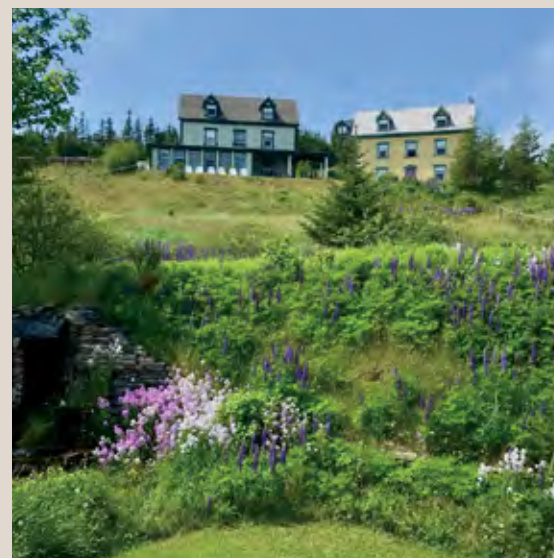
The Fishers' Big Move was the first of several more leaps of faith. The transplanted urbanites went on to transform themselves into innkeepers and to warmly embrace their new community.

More than a quarter-century later, their first book is a love song in words and images to that place and their journey. It features:

- * **Words from Dame Judi Dench**, who fell under the spell of Fishers' Loft Inn during the filming of *The Shipping News*
- * **Recipes for 80+ delicious dishes** served at the Inn
- * **Introductions to special people** whose contributions led to the Inn's viability and style—and also to visitors' delight
- * **Many of the natural and cultural attractions** sprinkled across the Bonavista Peninsula, where the Inn is located

Fishers' Loft Inn is now well established and much loved by all who dine or stay there. This book captures that memorable experience and shares both the Fishers' journey and their firm belief in the wonderful things that can happen when you take a chance.

The award-winning Fishers' Loft Inn overlooks Trinity Bay, in Port Rexton, Newfoundland and Labrador.



fishersloft.com
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