



# Lake Winnipeg Smoked Whitefish Dip

By  
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In the middle of January, actually towards the end of January, during a, once again, mild spell in our winter weather, we, the Lake Winnipeg Writer's Group, had this absolutely delicious potluck dinner with our authors and colleagues at the home of Jeanne Gougeon in Winnipeg Beach. Usually this potluck happens around Christmas but we just couldn't fit in for all the Christmas hustle and bustle.

The group's members are making their home around the Interlake region. They have to make a big effort to come to our monthly meetings as distances require a bit of driving, 30 minutes, even an hour and a half. But come they will, as the evenings are entertaining and huge amounts of fun, and always big on learning to write better poems and more exciting prose. Over the years, as we share our writing efforts, a great trust in each other has developed with the core members – about 12, not a great amount but considering the demographics of the Manitoba Interlake, that number is pretty good. I know from my experience as the founder and organizer for 10 years of the WAVE Artists' Studio Tour in the Interlake, that it also has a core of 12 or less members who 'run' things to make the tour happen. Same with the LWWG core who come to meetings and publish the Lake Winnipeg Writers' Group journal *Voices* twice annually and author poems and short stories, and publish wherever they get accepted. Kudos to them, I say.

Now back to the potluck evening. The entrées were chili con carne, and pulled pork, honey garlic pork balls, curried spinach salad with cranberries and yellow peppers. Yummy. Three different kinds of breads including Kaiser buns, exotic potato/ leek soup and Lake Winnipeg smoked whitefish dip. And for dessert—well no potluck dinner in the Interlake can be without Vineterta/Vienna torte the authentic Icelandic dessert much loved by all. Home baked banana and pumpkin breads rounded up the offerings.

This was a good occasion to get to know new members. Maurice Guimond and Jeanne Gougeon. Jeanne joined the LWWG a year ago, and Maurice joined us just in the fall of 2011. He took on the editor's job for *Voices* taking over from Richard Koreen who had been editor for five years. Happily at our gathering we got to know Maurice's other muse, his singing voice, and Irish lyrics playing the bushman drum. He brought along his musician friends Susan and Paul Hammer. The couple's reputation had already preceded them for they moved into Winnipeg Beach in the summer of 2011. They hadn't wasted any time to make the rounds to play their wonderful Irish music. During our potluck evening Paul

played guitar and madolin and Susan played concertina, bushman drum, and tin whistles. Ah, and the stories...they told. Susan and Paul also give classes for those instruments. After moving into Winnipeg Beach they found out the plethora of talents in our neck of the woods to their utter amazement. It's awesome, they say. And Maurice revealed a little more about himself of being born and bread a lumberjack- not an unusual combination lumberjack/ writer. I can highly recommend if you want to get a glimpse into the lives of contributing writers to *Voices*, just read the authors' biographies placed at the back in every issue and of course visit the Lake Winnipeg Writers' Group webpage for updates.

After dinner we went down to business. When we planned this evening there had to be a writing exercise. The writers were instructed to purchase a journal (under \$5). In this journal they should write a few first lines of a story or a poem. This would be passed along to another writer who then continues according to instructions or just proceed to fill the pages of this journal creatively. These creative efforts are to be read during our next regular meeting. These were the rules. Easy. Just reading out loud the one-liners or poems after dinner resulted in some hilarious moments as well as reflective pauses.

The food was polished off, not a drop of coffee or tea left and Maurice and Cathy were anxious to get on the road for the one-hour drive back into Winnipeg. One last song when all joined in the chorus:

Oh me name it is Sam Hall chimney sweep, chimney sweep....  
Oh me name it is Sam Hall chimney sweep  
Oh me name it is Sam Hall and I've robbed both great and small  
And my neck will pay for all when I die, when I die  
And my neck will pay for all when I die

Four great verses with Maurice's voice waxing, we the chorus more confident with each verse. Then rousing applause and laughter.

Suddenly all the well fed authors jumped to lend a hand with clearing the table and stacking the dishwasher to the chagrin of the hostess. Recipes were requested from the creative cooks and I will oblige by adding the recipe for Lake Winnipeg Smoked Whitefish dip. I for one came away from our evening exclaiming to my dear partner Jim,

"Now this crowd is fun, never a dull moment, and my Lake Winnipeg smoked whitefish dip went over well, too."

I will share my recipe, I think, why not. Tyra already asked for it during the dinner. Let's see.

The fish has to be Whitefish; it is second to the Salmon rich in omegas. I get my supply of superbly smoked fish from Clarence and Kristy Sveinson, on Highway 9 just before you get into the town of Gimli. We are practically living on a peninsular. The Manitoba Interlake, that vast low-lying area between Lakes

Manitoba and Winnipeg. Fishing is the largest industry, so you will find a lot offered in the way of fresh fish and smoked.

Debone and flake the meat of three large smoked Whitefish, remove all little bones. My Icelandic friend Norma, taught me to put the whole fish into the microwave or oven. Microwave at high two minutes. In the oven on high and touch fish to feel hot also only minutes. Don't cook. This way the skin is easier to remove. The fat liquefies real fast, and can be left out of the dip. Myself I love to scrape most fat and bits from the inside of the skin and eat later. Freshly smoked fish, just out of the smoker, is delicious to eat right away. For the dip, fish could have been three days to a week in the fridge. I store them in brown paper bags, on no account in plastic, place the brown bag on a plate or plastic bag, when storing in the fridge. I also turn the bag once in a while. The Sveinson's fish is placed in a salted brine they also slightly colour it so the smoked fish will have the delicate pink red look of salmon. Clever, eh?

The pink or white pickled ginger is a Japanese product and comes in jars available in most oriental stores. Ken Arnason, descendant of the original Icelanders who arrived 1875 in November at Willow Island in Lake Winnipeg, and proprietor of Gimli's grocer and butcher TIP TOP, has the most versatile and beautifully balanced steak spice, which he sells in packages of various sizes. My all time favourite all-purpose spice. But don't put it in soups while still boiling the black pepper will give a terribly hot flavour. Not nice. I add it when serving the soup. If need be.

Of course, every recipe should be adapted to one's own taste, so the second time around when making the dip, measure all the ingredients as you wish. I am reminded of my first painting teacher Nik Belajac, who insisted that one should start a painting with thin layers to achieve the right hue not with large gobs of paints. Good advice when it comes to recipes and this delicately flavoured dip.

The dip can be prepared in advance. Keep the flaked fish mixture in the fridge and fold the mayonnaise and yoghurt under just before the dip is served. If it wasn't all devoured in one setting it is still delicious the following day. I like the quantity of three fish, that way there is plenty for guests and maybe some for the next day.

## Ingredients

3 large smoked whitefish flaked  
1 tbsp Charlottes or red onion, chopped fine  
1tbsp pickled ginger slices chopped fine  
2 tbsp pickled ginger juice  
1 tsp spice mixture  
½ cup Hellmann's mayonnaise  
2 tbsp Astro yoghurt 3% no flavour

Mix onion, chopped ginger and ginger juice with the flakes and let stand in fridge for an hour. Turn occasionally.

Before serving fold in mayonnaise, yoghurt and spice mix. Thoroughly mix but don't beat.

And should anyone have trouble or be insecure about the final outcome of this recipe, blame it on me. My advice is to taste it anyway. As I said, never a dull moment, that applies to recipes too.

Of course my writers' friends have an advantage, as the delicate flavour must still linger on their taste buds.

Yes, No?

