

PIONEER FOOD

Larry m Slade

In 1995 I wrote a series of songs and poems about Cache Valley History for Cache Children's Choir to celebrate the Utah State Centennial. The poem, 'Pioneer Grub Stuff', was part of that collection. Most of the foods which I included in the poem/song came from my pioneer ancestors, foods with which I was familiar. Others came from recipes in books about pioneer foods. Recipes for the foods mentioned in the poem are given at the end of this paper along with recipes for other pioneer foods.

PIONEER GRUB STUFF

Larry m Slade

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*This was a breakfast Pioneers ate, stuff they put upon their plate,
A morning meal that tasted great, good as good could be!
Spotted Dog, Lumpy Dick, Barley Coffee, Mormon Tea,
Oh, this was a breakfast that they ate, good as good could be!*

*Dinner at noon was Slumgullion, yes, by gum, Slumgullion,
A tasty bowl of Slumgullion, or Extra Rooster Noodle Stew.
Clabbered Pudding for desert, plus a jug of Brigham Brew,
Oh, dinner was yummy Slumgullion, or Extra Rooster Noodle Stew.*

*Supper was often bread and milk, hard bread soaked in milk,
A simple meal of bread and milk, or Bread and Punk.
When the daily toil was done, and the evening sun had set,
Then supper was often Graveyard Stew, or Bread and Fet.*

*This was some food the Pioneers ate, stuff they put upon their plate –
Strange things the Pioneers ate;
Bet it tasted good!
Yum, yum, yum,
Yum, yum, yum,
Yum!*

The melody for Pioneer Grub Stuff is a Swedish folk song.

When Pioneer emigrants left their native lands, they took the culture of their old homes with them. Such was the case with food, which included recipes of the things they ate as well as methods of preparation. In the new land they assimilated food information from other immigrants to develop a Pioneer food culture.

So it was when my Grandmother, Erika Mathilda Peterson Björklund came to Pleasant Grove, Utah from Frösthult, Västmanland, Sweden in 1889. Grandmother Anderson (she married Spjut Swen Olof Anderson in Utah) had learned to cook Swedish food from her mother, as well as receiving instruction while working in the kitchen of a Riksdagsman (Member of Parliament), and in a training school at Sparsättra.

No doubt young girls in Sweden were taught methods of food preparation from

books such as *Hjelpreda I Hushållningen För Unga Fruentimber* (Assistance In Housekeeping For Young Women) which was published in 1775 by Cajsa Warg, and became the standard for cooking in Sweden. In her book, Warg told how to prepare and serve everything from soup to nuts. She is the most well known cook in Swedish history.

My Grandmother used her experience to teach my mother how to prepare several Swedish dishes such as Köttbullar (Meat Balls), Frukt Soppa (Fruit Soup), Risgrynsgröt (Rice Pudding), Rullsylta (Head Cheese), Kalvdans (Colostrum Pudding), and Blodpudding (Blood Pudding). The traditional Thursday Pea Soup in honor of Thor, the Viking God of Thunder, was served regularly. And so these foods from Sweden became Pioneer foods for her family in Utah, and later on for our family in Colorado.

But my mother cooked other foods as well which she learned from her Pioneer in-laws and neighbors. Sunday breakfast was sometimes Lumpy Dick which my Grandmother Slade taught her to make, and we ate a lot of Mormon Gravy on our potatoes. By the way, I think the Swedes might have had something to do with naming thickened milk, Lumpy Dick. It was lumpy and thick, but Swedes didn't pronounce the th sound, so they called it Lumpy Dick instead of Lumpy Thick.

Sunday dinner in our home was usually a pot of Pinto Beans left cooking on the stove while we were in church. Mother learned this 'Pioneer' method of cooking beans in a Dutch Oven from the cowboys and shepherders who worked on my father's ranch. My father's favorite evening meal was bread and milk with green onions or radishes dipped in salt, a common evening meal of his Pioneer parents. He also enjoyed a hot bowl of Graveyard Stew, seasoned with salt, pepper and butter. Bread dipped in bacon grease was a morning staple for our family of hard workers.

Food could be gotten from the land in Northern Utah, but immigrants to the territory were generally not familiar with how to go about getting fed from this strange environment. The Northwestern Shoshone had utilized the resources of Northern Utah for centuries. They relied on the buffalo, elk, deer, antelope and rabbit for meat, as well as crickets and grasshoppers as other sources of protein. Grass seeds and Pinion nuts were gathered and pounded into dough to make 'bread'. They gathered and stored seeds, berries, insects and roots in granaries. But it is unlikely that the European immigrants took much advantage of this 'native knowledge'.

Pioneer immigrant cooks waited for 'European' crops to grow to provide food they were used to, generally failing to use the assets of their new land to keep from being hungry. For example, Swedish cuisine was centered on dairy products, berries, stone fruits, seafood and fresh water fish. A wide variety of breads were made from rye, oats, wheat and barley grains. A basic staple in their diet were the white, dark, sour-dough, whole-grain, soft and crisp flatbreads. Meats were served with lingon berries. Various turnips including rutabaga (named "Swede" by the British) were used along with potatoes.

That is not to say that many resources such as big game animals, rabbits, water fowl and trout from the streams were ignored. Beaver Tail Soup became a new entry in Pioneer recipe books as well as Fried Rattlesnake. They were taught by Native Americans to use the root of the Sego Lily which they ate dried, roasted, boiled or raw as a starchy substitute for potatoes and the Joint Stem (Ephedra) plant for tea. However the foods of the Pioneers were basically European in format.

RECIPES

Spotted Dog:

6 slices stale dry bread	2 tbsp. cinnamon
4 eggs	1 tsp. nutmeg
2 c. milk	1 small onion, chopped
1c. raisins	½ lb. butter
½ lb. brown sugar	2 apples, chopped

Break bread into bite size pieces. Beat eggs well and mix with milk. Add raisins, sugar and apples. Mix well. Add onion and spices. Melt butter in 2 cups of water; mix with bread pieces and add all to milk mixture. Pour into well-greased Dutch oven and bake until solid, about 1 hours.

Lumpy Dick:

1½ qt. milk	½ tsp. salt
1 c. Flour	1 egg

Bring the milk to a boil. While you are waiting for it to boil, mix flour, salt and egg together. Stir mixture with a fork until it crumbles into little crumbles. When the milk begins to boil, turn off the stove and put the mixture in. Stir it a few times, put a lid on it and let it sit.

You can add butter, sugar, cinnamon and cream to it or just salt and butter.

Barley Coffee:

Roast barley @ 425 F until dark brown. Grind and use.

Mormon Tea (Brigham Tea):

Put a handful of stocks of Ephedra plant in an earthen bowl and pour 1 quart of boiling water over it. Let steep for a few minutes. Strain and drink hot or cold. Do not boil.

Slumgullion:

Watery meat stew.

Extra Rooster Noodle Stew:

Kill a rooster, not young nor the oldest. Scald it, pluck your feathers, and singe. Wash very good. Cut up. Put in heavy kettle. Barely cover with water. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Boil one hour for each year old till almost tender. Add 1 cup of diced potatoes, 1 cup diced carrots, ½ of a small diced onion. Cook until almost tender. Then add the noodles and cook about 10 minutes.

Clabbered Pudding:

Clabbered skim milk with sugar and cinnamon.

Brigham Brew:

Soak dandelion roots, yarrow, hops, and sugar together. Let ferment for 3 to 4 days.

Bread and Punk:

Punk was whatever was left in the pot.

Graveyard Stew:

Toasted bread and hot milk.

Bread and Fet:

Bread dipped in bacon fat.

Risgrynsgröt:

2/3 cup long-grain white rice	1 ½ cups water
¼ to ½ tsp salt	3 1/3 cups milk
1 cinnamon stick	1 blanched almond
Sugar	

1. Rinse rice and put into a pan with water and salt and let boil 5 minutes. Take off heat and let sit for 15 minutes so rice absorbs more water.
2. Put pan back on stove. Add milk, cinnamon and almond, stirring now and then while the porridge is cooking until it has lagom (just right) thickness.
3. Serve with milk, cream, jam, ground cinnamon or whatever you like.

Rullsylta:

Boil a calf's (pig's) head in water enough to cover it, until the meat leaves the bone.

Take it with a skimmer into a wooden bowl or tray. Take from it every particle of bone. Chop it small; season with pepper and salt. A heaping teaspoon of salt and a heaping teaspoon of pepper should be sufficient. If liked, add a tablespoon of finely chopped sweet herbs. Lay a cloth in a colander. Put the minced meat into it, then fold the cloth closely over it. Lay a plate over, and on it, a gentle weight. When cold it may be sliced thin for supper or sandwiches.

Kalvdans:

1 liter colostrum (may be mixed with regular milk)
Pinch of salt, 1 tbsp sugar, 1 tbsp ground cardamom or cinnamon.
Heat oven to 302 F
Mix salt, sugar and cardamom and add to milk
Put in a 1.5 liter pan and cook in a water bath for an hour or until the mixture has settled. Serve with lingon.

Fried Rattlesnake:

The snake should be kept alive and in good condition until eaten. Never bludgeon with clubs or rocks; the head should be removed with an axe and disposed of immediately. Split the body down the belly and remove the skin. Clean and gut in fresh water. Due to reflex action, the snake will squirm and wiggle for some time after the head is removed and may crawl out of the pan if left unattended. Dice the snake in about 2 inch pieces using a sharp knife. Soak these pieces overnight.

There are two good ways to prepare:

1. 1 egg, cup of milk, and 1 tsp salt. Make a batter similar to batter for fried chicken; roll the pieces in the batter and then in equal parts of cracker crumbs and flour. Deep fat fry until golden brown.
2. Fix the same as above but instead of deep frying, pan-fry and then simmer in 1 cup water until tender as you would Southern fried chicken.

Beaver Tail Soup:

Take two beaver tails and pour boiling water over them in a pan. The scales will come off. Wash well and put in a kettle and cook. They will dissolve into a thick broth. No bones much. Then add any vegetables you like or macaroni or beans; add seasoning. This is a rich soup and an old trappers standby.

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