



Champion Stillmeadow Hol-  
lyberry Red

question and non-dog people wouldn't understand anyway. Unless a dog is a watchdog or one who will go to the woods and bring back dead birds or track lost jewelry or take care of the baby or, when not in service, sit quietly all day in a pen, why in the world have one? Why not settle for an immaculate house, a leisurely schedule, and being able to put a platter of chicken down on the coffee table any time?

The answer for me is easy. I enjoy being loved, uncritically, unconditionally, without prejudice, and with unwavering fidelity. I think the trouble with the world is there is not enough love in it. I like my house full of it. When I am sad, my dog does not reason with me, but I find a velvet nose pressed tenderly on my lap and hear a soft sigh blowing through sensitive lips.

GLADYS TABER lives in a 1690 house, collects milk glass, and has owned cocker spaniels and Irish setters all her life. "Writing thirty-five books and magazine fiction and articles as well as regular columns add up to a busy life," but she still has time for her grandchildren.

When I am ecstatic, I have a companion leaping in the air and uttering barks of pleasure. When I am ill, Holly does not remind me that it is all my fault for not taking those vitamins. She gets up on the bed, curls into a ball, and obviously aches all over.

With my family and my dear friends, I am always conscious of needing to live up to their expectations. When I fail to do so, I am tense and despondent, and when I do live up to them, I worry about how things will be next Tuesday!

But with my dog, all I have to do is *be*. And never, under any circumstances, let a door be closed between us.

When Holly decides to go out at three in the morning, she stands by my bed holding my slippers, both of them, in her mouth. What more could I ask?

Cleated to our barn door, on Carr's Pond Road in the early days of August 1916, was a poster announcing "Frenchtown Clambake to be held in Deacon Timothy Andrews' Grove on August 23, 1916 IF RAINY NEXT FAIR DAY."

That traditional Rhode Island Clambake, in the very middle of the state, attracted a caravan of autos and carriages under sunny skies. Several young folks came on foot from as far away as West Greenwich and Warwick. Parking space was near a barway in the freshly mowed meadow bordering Tillinghast Road. The grove, just south of the meadow, was clear of underbrush and had the tallest, straightest hardwood trees anywhere around East Greenwich.

Sunlight dappled long, white-covered tables, benches ranged alongside. White wrapping paper, the store kind from a mammoth roll, was used to spread the sawbuck tables with slick smoothness. Besides being attractive, the paper made it simple to set up for "second table" and also pleased the clean-up committee.

Easy to spot was the ticket man

## Rhode Island Clambake

by Doris K. Sutcliffe

presiding over the tables, welcoming in all directions at once, and wearing the day's last clambake ticket tucked into his hatband like a feather.

The chowder man at his great, black iron kettle kept an open fire crackling. At the same time he stirred pork and onions, quahaugs and milk, blended with diced potatoes and butter in the right amount, at just the right moment. With long-handled spoon in one hand and a two-foot stick in the other, he was deliberately doing two things at once, demonstrating to his young stand-in how *practice* had made *perfect!* It was nearly chowder time, but not quite.

Water girls and coffee boys were still sampling the oyster crackers, receiving final instructions from a lady who commanded by keeping her voice down and simply looking attractive.

Ordinary tones of people talking, and even the louder voices of men working around the bake, sounded as if contained in some immense high-ceilinged hall. Pungent salty



Tucked in by the skillful bakemaster and his jolly helpers.

And the rush is on when Bakemaster Arthur Briggs announces: "Here it comes."



air and informal friendliness had taken over.

"They're opening the bake!" It was like a chorus—echoing. At a signal from the bakemaster, men began hauling canvas sheets off the steaming mound.

"Here it comes!" The first crowd finishing their chowder watched while men, working in pairs, brought tubs of hot clams toward the tables. "Watch out for the drippings, there!"

Abundance of the sea and of the countryside was heaped upon thick white plates until there were no more takers to the shouts of "Clams!" "Dressing!" "Sweet potatoes and white potatoes!" "Fish!" "Have another ear of corn!" "Get your hot clams!"

Some folks had disciplined themselves to shuck their entire quart

basket of clams before eating *any*. Others used a three-point system of shuck, dip, and chew. Between these two schools of shucking were the moderate shuckers who always left a few clams in the bottom of the basket.

Many were the little white pitchers of melted butter passed along with a nudge—"Let it trickle 'round your plate!" There were nappies of farmers' pickles just out of brine, and plates of homemade brownbread, both plain and raisin. There were clam shells!

And there was plenty of advice. Old hands gave neighborly hints to newcomers. "Save room on your plate for onions. They'll be along later." "Hold your cup out from the table for the coffee boy to pour." "You don't need sugar! — The coffee already has milk and sugar in it. This

is clambake coffee. Hot? Any hotter it'd scald you!" — "Sure. Pile the shells right on the table. We all do. Nobody's going to care. — Here, wipe your hands on this."

The hum of conversation rose in tempo with an unwritten couplet:

*We thank the good Creator, who be-  
queathing rocks and clams Gave us  
unified devotion to this land of Uncle  
Sam's.*

Dessert came in a flourish of color with the serving of native watermelon, sliced for second helpings. And to top off the annual event some folks, mindful that a successful clam-bake is also an A-Number-One caterer, meandered over to the cake booth where they selected a chocolate layer to carry home for supper — as a sort of *after-stayer*.

One young man who worked at

that clambake, knee-deep in rockweed, close to fifty years ago, is today affectionately nicknamed RHODE ISLAND'S CLAMBAKE KING! He is Arthur Briggs.

The arts of constructing and consuming a clambake remain the proud accomplishments of those who live near the shores of Narragansett Bay. Bakemasters today perpetuate their art. The time-honored hot-stone method, handed down from the Narragansett Indians, is changeless. Stone has an important place in the construction of a bake. "First I make sure I have bucket-size stones, good clams and fish. They make a difference in a bake," said Arthur Briggs, bakemaster. "Judging the proper heat of the stones is most important, as insufficient heating will ruin all that is to follow."

Preparation starts early in the day.

All the ingredients of a bake are washed thoroughly. Potatoes are scrubbed and washed. Bushels of clams are sorted to remove any dead or broken ones. Plenty of help is needed because this is not a one-man show.

To prepare for putting on an old-fashioned, Indian-style bake, pick out a piece of level ground in an open clearing. Build up a good pile of bucket-size stones — fairly round field stones. Stack cordwood in bonfire fashion up, over, and around the stones into quite a pile. Make a roaring fire so flame from the "four foot lengths" leap into the air, burning fiercely for about an hour. An ample supply of round field stones is thrown into the blaze to remain until heated to a white heat. When the cordwood has burned away, the embers and ashes are raked off. The stones are left there red-hot.

There is no time to lose. Next comes the rockweed. Wet rockweed, gathered from the ocean, is quickly blanketed over the hot stones. On this sizzling, steaming bed, wire baskets full of clams are spread out. Wire baskets of sweet potatoes and white potatoes in their jackets, ears of sweet corn encased in the thin covering of their husks, filets of mackerel in small, individual paper bags, together with sausages, are piled over the clams.

Speed counts greatly at this point. "Lost motions means loss also of heat

built up in the stones for a half-hour or more," Mr. Briggs points out. Men cover the baskets with a lot of wet bags and canvas. The great mound of seafood is then quickly covered with a heavy tarpaulin, which is battened down and sealed to prevent any precious steam from leaking out.

All tucked in, the bake goes to bed.

The bakemaster and his staff turn things over to the rocks, the rockweed, and the clams! As soon as the clams are heated they break open, dropping the water they contain into the weeds. Steam is generated and seeps through the food, gradually cooking it and infusing the clam flavor into the entire larder.

"Nowdays they put in lobster, too, and sometimes chicken," added Mrs. Briggs, "and they wrap the fish in foil now." It is a fact that food tucked away under that tarpaulin will be cooked in steam, along with the clams.

An hour and fifteen minutes after the steaming process starts, the bake is ready to be served. For a large bake, however, one hour and a half is recommended, to be sure everything is done.

The bakemaster makes his decision.

Men wait for his signal, then start hauling canvas. No time is lost in removing that heavy tarpaulin and opening the sizzling mound. From a

cloud of pungent steam, the piping hot food is rushed directly to the tables, and in that atmosphere another Clambake Day is celebrated in Clambake country.

A gathering of five hundred hungry people, served with healthy portions from an Indian-style bake, can manage to "put away" fifteen hundred pounds of fish. Three-pounds-per-plate is gustatory art. Four-pounds-per-plate signifies the real pro. Clamshells heaped at random make the conversation piece.

Because of the bakemasters who perpetuate what generations of their predecessors had mastered, Rhode Island has made an institution of the clambake. Year after year, the informal atmosphere continues to delight people and refresh them. This is no prosaic achievement. Friendships are renewed on Clambake Day. It is a joyous time.

Every year someone is sure to ask how that delicious clam chowder is made. "Is it a secret?" they ask.

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Mrs. Emma Briggs, the bakemaster's wife, has written down her recipe, as follows

#### CLAM CHOWDER (for 100 people)

1 gallon of ground-up quahaugs  
and all liquor from opening them  
1 1/2 peck potatoes diced  
3 lbs salt pork cut fine and  
fried with onions  
3 lbs. onions  
1 lb. butter  
24 qts. water  
put ground quahaugs in when potatoes  
are near done, and seasoning:  
1/2 cup salt  
1 tablespoon pepper  
1/2 cup sugar  
Let come to boil, and skim. Put in butter. You can add 5 qts. of hot milk at last, if you wish, only be careful so it doesn't curdle.

Those who will have the opportunity to enjoy a genuine native bake this season can be sure that "all hands" will revel in this truly Rhode Island art.