

The Art of  
Scottish  
American  
COOKING



The Art of  
Scottish-  
American  
COOKING

KAY SHAW NELSON



PELICAN PUBLISHING COMPANY  
GRETNA 2007

Copyright © 2007  
By Kay Shaw Nelson  
All rights reserved

---

*The word "Pelican" and the depiction of a pelican are trademarks of Pelican Publishing Company, Inc., and are registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.*

---

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Nelson, Kay Shaw.

The art of Scottish-American cooking / Kay Shaw Nelson.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-58980-386-2 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Cookery, Scottish. 2. Scottish Americans. I. Title.

TX717.3.N448 2007

641.59411—dc22

2006100027



Printed in the United States of America

Published by Pelican Publishing Company, Inc.

1000 Burmaster Street, Gretna, Louisiana 70053

*To the memory of my Scottish-American parents,  
Dolina MacAskill and Angus Shaw, and my Scottish forebears  
the Morrisons, MacLeods, MacAskills, and Shaws,  
and to  
my Scottish-American friends*



# Contents

Preface .....	9
Acknowledgments .....	15
Introduction .....	17
Starters .....	27
Soups .....	47
Egg and Cheese Dishes .....	65
Fish .....	83
Poultry and Game .....	105
Meats .....	127
Vegetables and Salads .....	151
Barley, Oats, and Cornmeal .....	177
Breads .....	197
Cakes and Cookies .....	223
Desserts .....	243
Beverages .....	267
Index .....	293





# Preface

'Tis great fun and with tremendous pride that Scots don their kilts, tam-o'-shanters, tartans, and tweeds to enjoy the annual Christmas Walk, a joyous celebration of their Scottish heritage, in Alexandria, Virginia on the first weekend in December. "*Ceud Mile Failte*" (a hundred thousand welcomes) rings throughout historic Old Town with a spirited parade of tartan-clad pipe and drum bands, Scottish dancers, reenactment groups, and over 100 clans from near and far with their faithful companions, terriers and hounds, marching behind colorful banners.

Even if there is nary a Campbell, MacDonald, or Morrison in the family tree, it's a thrill to participate in this celebrated community event, traditionally the beginning of the Christmas season in Alexandria. A city long known for its hospitality, playing host to settlers, travelers, and visitors who love its entertainment and festivities, it's a great place and time of year to hoist "a cup o' kindness" and sing the praises of "*guid* Scottish fare."

Founded by Scottish merchants in 1749 when clipper ships brought a thriving tobacco trade to the Potomac River shores, Alexandria is known both as George Washington's hometown and as the Scottish capital of the United States. It was named after a Scotsman, John Alexander, who, in 1670, bought 6,000 acres of land, including what is today the city, for "six thousand pounds of tobacco and cask." Most of the early settlers in the small seaport community were Scots who found the climate

and commercial prospects an agreeable change from their austere life and homeland.

Located across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., Alexandria is one of America's most picturesque cities. It has preserved many of its centuries-old homes, churches, buildings, and taverns, which are still in use and can be reached along treelined cobblestone streets. Scots figured largely in the foundation of the town as well as in its entertainment. Customs from Scotland were retained, and even today Alexandria celebrates those holiday festivities featuring hospitality and the sharing of food and drink. As one proud citizen explains, "Alexandria loves being Scottish," and the city presents a colorful blend of year-round events commemorating its homeland clan, tartan, music, and cookery traditions.

The Christmas Walk began in 1970 and is now sponsored by The Campagna Center, a service association, in conjunction with the City of Alexandria and The St. Andrew's Society. Named after St. Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland, such societies were established in the 18th century to help Scots settle in American locales. Among the first was that of Alexandria, now called The St. Andrew's Society of Washington, D.C., with origins dating back to 1760, a charitable and social organization of men of Scottish birth and ancestry. Its male members like to perpetuate Scottish traditions with good food and drink and the observance of treasured holidays.

In Alexandria and around the country many of the 20 million Americans of Scottish extraction end the December Yule season with the celebration of Hogmanay (Old Year's Night), or New Year's Eve, the liveliest and greatest of all Scottish holidays. An important and merry event when family and friends gather for a ceremonial blessing of the home, it's characterized by cordial exchanges of good wishes and gifts, singing of nostalgic songs, playing of bagpipes, and dancing, as well as enjoying certain traditional dishes. The word is thought to derive from the old French *hoguignane*, meaning the last day of the year.



For years a special Hogmanay observation was held with a public reception at The Carlyle House, built in 1752 by John Carlyle, a city founder and prosperous Scottish merchant. The Georgian stone house is patterned after Craighiehall, in West Lothian, Scotland. A feature of the event was the “first-footing” ceremony performed on the house’s terrace by a member of the City of Alexandria’s official bagpipe band at midnight. Many of the guests who attended were of Scottish descent and wore their family tartans.

Now Hogmanay is celebrated in many private homes with an annual Old Year’s Night Party where guests enjoy the captivating and significant first-footing ceremony. Once the New Year has been announced after the stroke of midnight, everyone waits in anticipation for the arrival of a portentous visitor, the “first foot,” whose character and appearance are believed to determine the household’s fortune for the coming year. Toasting and greetings are in progress when, in the midst of the gaiety, a loud knock comes on the door. “Someone’s first footin’ ye,” shouts one of the guests, as the celebrating suddenly stops and all eyes turn to see the caller. With luck, it will be a tall, dark-haired man—said to be a sign of good fortune.

The welcome first-footer and later the guests bring hand-sels (good-luck gifts) symbolizing life, hospitality, and warmth, such as cheese (magic), bread, cake, a lump of coal to place on the fire, red herring (plenty), and always whisky. Then the celebrating and feasting begin, lasting often until dawn. Everyone loves the spirit and sentiment of the observance. The sound of the bagpipes evokes fond memories of past good times and family celebrations.

Food plays a significant role in the New Year’s party and each home has a “thumping good supply” of traditional specialties. Among them are haggis (the much-maligned meat-oatmeal pudding often drenched in whisky), smoked fish, cold and hot game dishes, lamb pies, black bun (a rich spicy fruitcake baked in pastry), shortbread in several varieties, gingerbread cakes and loaves, bannocks (breads), oatcakes,



scones, spice and fruit cakes, mince pies, creams, and puddings.

The Scottish spirit of conviviality lives on, not only in Alexandria but also throughout the United States and Canada wherever Scots are.

I, like other Scottish Americans, love the lively celebrations called Scottish or Highland Games and Gathering of the Clans, held throughout the country, as well as cherished holiday events that honor ancient spirited traditions with joyous dining and drinking interspersed with exuberant toasts, orations, and melodies. All it takes for a nostalgic get-together is a homey Scottish dish or two and a wee dram to start singing “Annie Laurie,” “Comin’ thro’ the Rye,” and “Loch Lomond.”

Ever since my childhood in Lebanon, New Hampshire, one of the most attractive towns in New England, I have been fascinated with tales about Scots and Scottish culinary traditions, particularly those centered on the small isle of Cape Breton, just off Nova Scotia’s mainland. For this was the beloved homeland of my Scottish parents, Dolina MacAskill and Angus Shaw, and their forebears, the MacLeods and Morrisons, who had settled happily in the inviting coves and impressive highlands to fish, raise sheep, weave, knit, cook, and perpetuate their Scottish heritage.

I was brought up to enjoy the delight and goodness of homemade soups, nutty-flavored oatmeal porridge, delicious scones eaten hot off the griddle, and whole-wheat breads. Over the years, while traveling and living in foreign countries as well as America, I have had the pleasure of enjoying the hospitality of many Scots and Scottish Americans, particularly those in the Washington, D.C., area.

Although Scottish cooking is rarely acknowledged as noteworthy, the descendants of Scots are instinctive, genuine cooks who take great pride in the preparation of food and who added their traditional recipes to the American cuisine, often with remarkable adaptations. This book represents a fascinating repertoire of the varied specialties ranging from



wholesome, nutritious dishes to ambrosial sweets and tempting baked symbols of hospitality, especially cakes and buttery shortbread.

*The Art of Scottish-American Cooking* recognizes and celebrates the rich culinary heritage of Scots who settled in the United States and Canada and their descendants. I hope that it enhances your knowledge of their many contributions, adds variety and interest to your menu, and brightens the dining experiences of everyone who sits at your table.





# Acknowledgments

I have a long list of people, publications, and organizations to thank for helping me considerably in my quest for knowledge and recipes to write a Scottish-American tome that is part history book, part travelogue, part cookbook. Above all it is a chronicle to document the importance of the rich culinary heritage of Scots who contributed so much to the dining pleasures of the United States and Canada.

For many years, beginning during my childhood in Lebanon, New Hampshire, where I learned about my Scottish heritage from my parents, and during visits with relatives in other New England locales as well as Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, I have been fascinated with the history, folklore, lifestyles, and cookery of the Scots. I thank them all, especially those kind men and women who spent hours with me in local markets and kitchens, providing marvelous hospitality, friendly conversations, and homemade specialties. From my Scottish kinsmen I learned about the pride in preparing and serving traditional fare.

At the many colorful Highland Games, Gathering of the Clans, holiday celebrations, and informal home events, I met many people who shared their special knowledge and often personal or family recipes with me. It would be impossible to list all the persons who gave me so much. I have also received support from the members of the Clan Shaw Society, MacAskill Sept Society, The Living Legacy of Scotland, The Scottish Literary Forum, and The St. Andrew's Society of Washington, D.C.

I also thank my late husband, Wayne Nelson, for supporting me in my effort to prove that the Scottish Americans do have a fascinating and delectable cuisine that is a pleasure both to cook and to eat. I thank all the friendly Scottish Americans who provided helpful talks and hospitality during my travels and my neighbors and friends who were kind enough to share dishes and meals with me over the years while I tested the recipes. Their comments and useful hints were and are appreciated.

I am indebted to the librarians, culinary historians, and food writers, as well as many publications from which I acquired considerable knowledge. These include *The Scottish Banner*, *The Highlander*, *The Family Tree*, and *Scottish Heritage USA (SHUSA)*, as well as *The Mark of the Scots*, by Duncan A. Bruce, and *How the Scots Invented the Modern World*, by Arthur Herman, among others.

For this book I am especially grateful to my publisher, Milburn Calhoun, and editor, Nina Kooij, for giving me the opportunity to write it and for providing assistance. As always I wish to thank my daughter, Rae, for her continued support and editorial insight while I wrote the book.





# Introduction

For 400 years, untold numbers of Scots—Highlanders, Lowlanders, Islanders, and Ulster-Scots, generally known as Scotch-Irish or Scots-Irish—came to America seeking political asylum, religious freedom, adventure, and economic opportunity. Beginning in the spring of 1607 when the first permanent settlement in North America was established on the James River in Tidewater, Virginia, Scottish men and women would play a significant but often unproclaimed role in the development of the United States and Canada.

Scots have a certain mystique about them that is not easily discernible. Their place in our culture is more versatile and important than generally realized. 'Tis a great pleasure to mingle with hundreds of Scottish Americans at the lively, colorful, and meaningful Highland Games and Gathering of the Clans and recognize their lilting speech, exhilarating music of pipes, fiddles, drums, and harp, as well as athletic competitions noted for energy, ingenuity, and talent. As one Scot explains, "We are industrious people, noted for ambition and achievement, being highly motivated and aggressive, but who love to have a good time by perpetuating our culture with characteristic traditions, including favorite dishes and drinks."

In recent years several publications and Scots have heralded many of the far-reaching influences of Scottish immigrants and their descendants on American history. The Scottish Coalition, composed of eight national organizations serving the Scottish-American community principally

through research and long-term planning and as a resource for information and guidance, is very active. Most important is the celebration on April 6 of Tartan Day, officially recognized by a U.S. Senate resolution to honor the many contributions Scottish Americans have made to the character and development of the United States. 'Tis a great day with hundreds of thousands of individuals paying homage to the Scots with banquets and festivities. "The Bands Are Marching, The Pipers Are Piping, The Fiddlers Are Fiddling, The Kilts Are Swirling, The Toasts Are Flowing, The Pride Is Showing," claims one salutation.

Scots numbered prominently among the Founding Fathers. Nine of the signatories of the Declaration of Independence were Scottish, and more than thirty men who have served as president of the United States have at least some Scottish ancestry. It was Pres. Woodrow Wilson who declared, "Every line of strength in our history is colored by Scottish blood."

Scottish ingenuity and talent produced some of our country's greatest inventors and scientists. Cyrus McCormick reinvented the reaper and founded the International Harvester Company. Robert Fulton pioneered steamboats and submarines, Samuel F. B. Morse built a functional telegraph and invented the Morse code, and Thomas Edison developed the electric light bulb and phonograph. It was Alexander Graham Bell who invented the telephone and M. G. Marconi, whose mother was Scottish, the radio. Andrew Carnegie made a fortune in the steel business and became known for his philanthropy and the establishment of libraries throughout the English-speaking world.

The beloved poets Archibald MacLeish and Robert Frost were proud of their Scottish heritage, as were the writers Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe, and Herman Melville. The Scots also brought their concern for education and from this came a commitment to public schools, colleges, and universities such as Princeton in New Jersey and Carnegie-Mellon in Pittsburgh. William Holmes McGuffey, the son of a Scottish spy for the American forces in the Ohio Indian wars, was one of the great American educators, called "The



Schoolmaster to Our Nation,” and best known as the author of McGuffey’s Readers. To date they have sold over 125 million copies.

Over the years Scots have had considerable influence on American architecture and art. Robert Mills, an American of Scottish ancestry, designed several buildings in our capital, including the U.S. Treasury and Washington Monument, meant to be the world’s largest and most splendid structure. The furniture designer Duncan Phyfe and artists Gilbert Stuart, James McNeill Whistler, Mary Cassatt, and Anna Robertson Moses (Grandma Moses) contributed to the richness of our country’s legacy.

Modern-day Americans of Scottish descent include DeWitt and Lila Acheson Wallace, co-founders of *Reader’s Digest*; the authors Dale Carnegie, David McCullough, John McPhee, and John Kenneth Galbraith; Earle R. MacAusland, founder and publisher of *Gourmet* magazine; publisher Malcolm Forbes, a gregarious gourmet; and astronauts Neil Armstrong and Alan Bean, who had a MacBean tartan specially woven and took it to the moon on the Apollo 12 flight.

While several publications have documented various Scottish-American achievements that have contributed so much to our history and culture, none before has ever put forth the important and fascinating culinary story, delving into the past and present of a creative and nutritious cookery that evolved in the United States and Canada. For there is a rich, notable Scottish-American food legacy that is best told not only with recipes but also historical data and culinary anecdotes involving personalities and places.

Look at a map of the United States and you’ll find any number of towns and cities named Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Scotland, Campbell, Cameron, Douglas, and Crawford, as well as more than a hundred places whose names begin with “Mac” or “Mc.”

Immigrants from Scotland who spread out over the countryside and settled primarily in farm areas of the New World brought with them memories and “receipts” for preparing



favorite family dishes. For all true Scots, sentimental about their culture and committed to an awareness of their roots, cooking was an attempt to hold on to a sense of identity. They reproduced their traditional dishes as closely as possible with familiar ingredients or strange ones introduced to them by the Indians, who taught them how to use the bounty of their new land. Many of the early food patterns and imaginative dishes and drinks they created centuries ago have lasted through the generations.

Noted for their warm hospitality and sharing of food, Scots belong to Scottish societies and clans and love the conviviality of celebrating traditional holidays. From colonial times Scots not only gathered in their homes for festive meals but they liked to drop into taverns, pubs, or social centers for casual eating and drinking as well as business and political meetings. Several of these “good hostelry” establishments are still in existence, offering fine fare and a historic atmosphere. In Virginia two of the early American dining places are Alexandria’s Gadsby’s Tavern, built in 1792 and frequented by our early presidents and statesmen, and the Rising Sun Tavern in Fredericksburg.

Just as double-crustured “puddings” are ancestors of American pies, and Auld Man’s Milk became the famous eggnog of America when it migrated from Scotland with early settlers, there are many other Scottish recipes that developed into our country’s regional favorites. Among these are Southern fried chicken, cured meats, hashes, kale dishes, scones (forerunners to biscuits), griddle cakes, flapjacks, shortbread, butterscotch candy and pie, chess pies, oatmeal porridge and cookies, and ginger cakes, cookies, and bread, to name only a few. Recipes for some of them can be found in early cookbooks such as *The Virginia Housewife Or, Methodical Cook*, 1824, by Mary Randolph, a notable woman of Scottish descent, and *Housekeeping in Old Virginia*, 1879, by Marian Cabell Tyree, the granddaughter of Patrick Henry.

We also have a lengthy Scottish-American legacy of agricultural, culinary, commercial food, and drink achievements, as well as dining establishments founded by remarkable Scots.

Scottish-born Grant Thorburn sold “love apple” or tomato



seeds in New York in 1807 and also promoted tomato culture and cookery. He later established a tomato seed farm. John McIntosh, the youngest son of a Scottish family that immigrated to America about 1776 and settled in New York State, became a farmer in Ontario, Canada, where the apple named for him originated in 1796. A Scots Canadian, David Fife, developed the first hard spring wheat in North America. After John Wallace, a farmer of Scottish ancestry, immigrated to the United States in 1832, his descendants would shape American agricultural policy for a century. Henry A. Wallace would become secretary of agriculture and then vice-president of the United States. In 1846 Mary Johnson of New Jersey invented the hand-cranked ice-cream freezer.

Armour & Co., founded in Chicago by Philip Armour, was by 1923 the largest meat packer in the world. Sir George Grant, a Scottish adventurer, went to Kansas and left behind the first herd of Black Angus cattle in America.

The eccentric clergyman Sylvester Graham, “father of public health in America,” invented Graham flour and a classic snack, the Graham Cracker, in 1829, and, later, Granola and Grape-Nuts, to combat malnutrition. An old family tradition holds that the ancestors of Will Keith Kellogg, who founded Kellogg cereals, originated in Scotland. Tillamook Cheddar cheese has been justly famous up and down the West Coast ever since Peter McIntosh brought his secret of making fine Cheddar from Canada to Tillamook County, Oregon. Two families, the Campbells and the Hutchisons of Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, jointly started a milling company and then the Chattanooga Bakery in the early 1900s. The most successful of their products was a sandwich coated with chocolate that we call Moon Pie.

The list goes on with Campbell’s Soups, created by Joseph Campbell, who was born in New Jersey to Scottish parents. Angus MacPease from Aberdeen sold the copyright for his wife’s version of Scottish pease porridge to Campbell’s Soups and it became the nutritious canned split-pea soup. Robertsons, the oldest cafeteria chain in the South, was



started by E. H. Robertson as a soda fountain in 1920 in Charleston and is known for its native Low Country fare. J. A. Morrison and G. C. Outlaw opened a cafeteria in Mobile, Alabama, in 1920 and Morrison's Cafeterias went on to become the largest chain in the country. Monterey Jack cheese is named after David Jacks, a Scot who joined the California Gold Rush but got rich making the cheese on his farm in Monterey County. It was Edmund McIlhenny who first made the famous Tabasco sauce with some hot Mexican peppers that he found in his Avery Island, Louisiana, kitchen garden.

Holiday Inns was founded by Charles Kemmons Wilson, an American of Scottish descent, and the Marriott hotel chain was begun in Washington, D.C. by J. Willard Marriott, of partial Scottish descent. McDonald's, the world's most successful restaurant company, was founded by two Irish-American brothers whose forefathers are said to be from Scotland.

Applejack, a brandy, was created in 1698 by William Laird, a Scot who is said to have been seeking a substitute for his native whisky. Laird & Co. of New Jersey, founded by a grandson, Robert, in 1780, still has a virtual monopoly on the manufacture of applejack in the United States.

In 1789 a Scottish frontier Baptist preacher named Elijah Craig of Georgetown, Kentucky, filled some charred barrels with corn and rye whisky he had made. He discovered that the drink changed color, the flavor mellowed, and a tradition was born. The new sour mash was named for Bourbon County, Kentucky, in which it was made.

Dr. James Crow, a physician who emigrated from Edinburgh, Scotland, to Kentucky in 1815, brought science to bourbon production by improving the methods of distillation with his sour-mash process. He is generally given credit for founding the modern bourbon industry; Old Crow Bourbon Whiskey is named for him.

America's most famous whisky is still made in Lynchburg, Tennessee, by relatives of the English-Scotsman Jack Daniel. Other early distillers with Scottish names include Spears, Hamilton, and Stewart.



In his remarkable book, *The Mark of the Scots*, Duncan A. Bruce mentions two Americans who did a great deal “to refine the taste of Americans for fine food” and who have Scottish ancestors. They are the late James Beard, a notable cookbook author who wrote extensively about food and wine, and Craig Claiborne, also a cookbook author, *New York Times* food editor, and critic, whose forefathers came from Aberdeen and settled in various locales of the United States. He wrote about and praised many Scottish dishes, including some he had enjoyed during his childhood in Mississippi.

James Beard was an ardent advocate of American cooking and its “rich and fascinating food heritage.” He spoke and often wrote about the culinary traditions of “the many people who have crossed the seas to form our new, still-young nation.” Among the American versions of Scottish dishes that he gave recipes for are Scotch Broth, Cullen Skink, Scotch Woodcock, Finnan Haddie, Oatmeal Bread, and Scones.

The late Julia Child, celebrated cook, author, television personality, and OSS veteran, was born of Scottish ancestry as Julia McWilliams. She is remembered for the unadulterated joy she projected on her “French Chef” and other TV programs. In 2003 she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, our nation’s highest civilian honor.

The late M. F. K. Fisher, “Philosopher-Poet of the Stove,” once America’s foremost gastronomical writer and the author of several notable cookbooks, had Scottish ancestors on her father’s side. He gave his family sage advice “gastronomically as well as in several other ways,” she wrote. “He wanted us to taste life in the round, with all of our senses as well as our wits to work for us. He considered the art of eating a basic part of the plan.”

In *The Art of Scottish-American Cooking* we will explore and enjoy not only sage advice but also backgrounds and recipes for dishes brought over the years from Scotland and created by cooks in the United States and Canada. Hopefully, it will give readers a fascinating and rewarding culinary adventure.







The Art of  
Scottish  
American  
COOKING