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## Waheeda Harris

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### What's Cooking Canada?

October 8, 2008 by [Waheeda](#)

*With A Taste of Canada, author Rose Murray shows us the past and celebrates the future of the Canadian food experience.*

Although *A Taste of Canada* (Whitecap Books) may be the book Rose Murray found hardest to write, it definitely has been an unforgettable experience.

“How do you leave anything out, when there’s so much in Canada?” asks the award-winning cookbook author, who is publishing the book, her tenth, this month. This culinary journey across Canada was seeded many years ago, as Murray has travelled from coast to coast since childhood, when she would visit her father’s extended family scattered across the west. With her own children, she chose a different province every year for their family vacations.

“From fiddleheads to salmon, we have so much wealth in our country. With three oceans, the bounty of the Prairies, forests, and so many farm areas, we’re so lucky to have it all in Canada,” explains Murray, who divided the book by food groups and added favourite recipes, explained the popularity of regional foodstuffs, and included menus celebrating the bounty of each province and territory. An avid gourmand, Murray is well known in the Canadian food world for books such as *A Year in My Kitchen* and *Hungry for Comfort*.

She has always emphasized buying the freshest possible produce and local ingredients. “I grew up on a farm near Collingwood, Ontario. I experienced the freshness of fruit from the tree and local sources for almost everything in our kitchen.” Although she no longer lives on a farm, Murray is a twice-a-week regular at the farmer’s market near her current home in Cambridge, Ontario.

Throughout *A Taste of Canada*, Murray delves into Canadian history: Aboriginal people showing settlers the importance of corn, beans, and squash and how to preserve food to survive harsh winters; the change in Canadian diets thanks to European and Asian immigration, bringing lamb, spices, and different vegetables to our tables; and the growing number of people who want to sample other cultures’ delicacies. The book celebrates a uniquely Canadian experience, our exposure to a wide range of

cultures and traditions, and how they mix with Canadian food sources.

Capitalizing on the surging interest in local products, Murray celebrates indigenous foods like cranberries, blueberries, maple syrup, and fiddleheads; the lesser known yet historically significant Jerusalem artichoke (a tuber that isn't really an artichoke); the rise and fall of cod and the obsession with salmon on both coasts; the wild rice and venison found in the north; and the urban obsession with dining out. "I remember living in Toronto in the early 1980s and eating out wasn't possible, as there weren't that many good restaurants," says Murray, who now relishes the chance to visit any of Canada's larger cities, where the trend in fine dining is Canadian cuisine or the blending of different cultural styles with Canadian ingredients.

Choosing recipes was a slow, 18-month process of elimination, balancing classic Canadian recipes such as tourtière, butter tarts, and maple baked beans with newer Asian-style faves such as spicy shrimp with cilantro and lime, pad Thai, and hot and sour soup. Murray included many twists on traditional recipes such as wine-pickled salmon, a pickerel BLT, and caramelized onion and pumpkin perogies, to show the unique interpretations emerging from kitchens across the country.

With *A Taste of Canada*, Murray shows us the past and celebrates the future, helping Canadians realize they should be proud of their regional delicacies and happily stock their pantry with grown-in-Canada products.

*Every part of Canada has its regional specialties. Here are Rose Murray's picks of what to look out for on your next trip:*

B.C. - Asian vegetables, cranberries, fish, specialty products such as goat cheese, wine, fruit

Prairies - beef, grains, mustard, honey

Ontario - wine, apples, tree fruits, variety of vegetables, lamb

Quebec - maple syrup, cheese, variety of fruits and vegetables, cranberries

Maritimes - potatoes, fiddleheads, fish, oysters, mussels, fruit

Newfoundland & Labrador - salt cod, fish, salt beef, venison, wild berries

Northern Canada - fish, wild rice, venison

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