

A Welcoming Wilderness

The Role of Wild Berries in the Construction of Newfoundland and Labrador as a Tourist Destination

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Holly Everett

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URI <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/018745ar>

DOI [10.7202/018745ar](https://doi.org/10.7202/018745ar)

Digital Publication : Sept. 8, 2008

An article of the journal [Ethnologies](#)

Volume 29, Issue 1-2, 2007, p. 49-80

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Abstract

Wild berries have long been integral to Newfoundlanders' and Labradorians' food stores. Berry picking remains an important late summer and early fall activity, combining traditional, geographical knowledge with material culture, foodways and custom. Berries may also be Newfoundland and Labrador's most successful culinary tourism product to date, combining attributes of health, wilderness and resourcefulness. Whereas ethical and moral uncertainty or conviction precludes many tourists from trying seal products, and health concerns prevent the enjoyment of regional favorites such as fish and chips, berries offer visitors a window into local culture beyond reproach. Reifying the text and images of national and provincial tourist literature emphasizing the area's "outdoor nature product," the berries serve as

an iconic image of a resourceful people intimately connected to a bountiful, welcoming wilderness.

Résumé

Les baies sauvages constituent depuis longtemps une base alimentaire à Terre-Neuve et au Labrador. La cueillette des baies reste une activité importante de la fin de l'été et du début de l'automne, car elle associe une connaissance géographique traditionnelle à la culture matérielle, aux modes d'alimentation et aux coutumes. Il se peut qu'à présent les baies soient aussi le produit alimentaire de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador qui obtienne le plus de succès auprès des touristes, car elles combinent des attributs de santé, de nature sauvage et de sources de bienfaits. Tandis que des incertitudes ou des convictions éthiques et morales préviennent beaucoup de touristes contre les produits à base de phoque, et que des préoccupations de santé les empêchent d'apprécier les plats régionaux comme le *fish and chips*, les baies permettent aux visiteurs de s'ouvrir à la culture locale en restant irréprochables. En réifiant le texte et les images de la littérature touristique nationale et provinciale qui met l'accent sur les « produits naturels de plein air » de la région, les baies deviennent l'icône d'un peuple plein de ressources, intimement lié à un environnement sauvage à l'abondance accueillante.

Biographical notes

Holly Everett

Holly Everett is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland where her research specialties include belief, material culture, music, and tourism. Her current research concerns the hospitality industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. Dr. Everett serves on the editorial board of *Shima*, an online international journal of research into island cultures, as well as on the executive board of the Canadian chapter of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music. *Roadside Crosses in Contemporary Memorial Culture*, her first book, was published by the University of North Texas Press in 2002.

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