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Résumé de l'article

Entre la fin des années 1940 et le milieu des années 1950, un groupe de publicitaires, de rédacteurs de livres de recettes et de journalistes de la culture pop ont présenté aux Canadiens une nouvelle forme de cuisson maison : le barbecue. L'idée de cuire des aliments sur un feu ouvert n'était pas nouvelle, mais la forme culturelle et le sens de cette nouvelle mode dans les banlieues de l'après-guerre étaient le produit direct de la vie des familles de la classe moyenne et des relations hommes-femmes dans le Canada des années 1950. Cet article explore plus particulièrement les raisons pour lesquelles les hommes jouent un rôle de premier plan dans la cuisson des aliments à l'extérieur et comment les vendeurs de cette culture ont tenté de normaliser cette transgression apparente des rôles traditionnels. L'auteur soutient que le barbecue figurait parmi les loisirs familiaux de l'après-guerre organisés autour du père qui étaient une conséquence de l'évolution du rôle de ce dernier, c'est-à-dire qu'on attendait de lui qu'il participe davantage à la vie domestique. Pourtant, cette étude de la culture « barbecue » d'après-guerre montre que lorsque les cloisons entre la vie publique et privée des hommes et des femmes tombaient, d'autres cloisons entre les loisirs et le travail venaient les remplacer, redéfinissant les rapports hiérarchiques entre les deux sexes.

Finding a Place for Father: Selling the Barbecue in Postwar Canada

CHRIS DUMMITT

Daily household chores do not figure prominently in images of 1950s manliness. Domesticity enters our remembrance of men's lives at that time as an absence; a point of wry humour for women, sly humour for men. But postwar men and women did label some household tasks as masculine; this paper looks at one such task, outdoor cooking. Men were central to the image of barbecuing, which advertisers introduced into the Canadian market and backyard during the late 1940s and 1950s. In this new form of household cookery the chief steak griller was male.

What should we make of men and barbecuing? In an era known for its strict gender division of labour, men's barbecuing transgressed normative gender roles.[1] Typically, preparing the evening meal was considered part of a homemaker's responsibilities. Why, then, did women not become the spatula-toting barbecue chefs of popular imagination? Certainly male cooks were not unknown. The army cook and the gourmet chef are two possible precedents. But both World War Two and the Korean War had ended by the mid 1950s and the backyard barbecue was not often celebrated as *haute cuisine*. And although hunting and fishing were popular pastimes, men's outdoor cooking in these

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1 On gender relations in the immediate postwar decades, see, Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto, 1997); Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto, 1996); Veronica Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada, 1945-1960," *Canadian Historical Review* 72 No.4 (1991): 471-504; "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle Class, 1945-1960," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29 No.3 (1994): 5-25; Mona Gleason, "Disciplining Children, Disciplining Parents: The Nature and Meaning of Advice to Canadian Parents, 1945-1955," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 29 (May 1996): 187-209. Useful counterpoints in the American literature include, Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York, 1988); Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia, 1994).

areas need not have translated into their position as the family backyard cook. So why did men become the family barbecue chef? What made barbecuing different from other forms of postwar cookery?

In this paper, I argue that barbecuing's masculine status arose out of broader changes in both postwar gender relations and notions of fatherhood; namely, an increased expectation that fathers be more involved in family domestic life. Men occupied an ambiguous place in postwar Canada's renewed cult of domesticity. Being a distant breadwinner was no longer sufficient, but a gender division of labour which assumed fatherly absence for much of the day remained unchecked.[2] It is within this narrow cultural space, a search for an appropriately modern place for men in 1950s domestic life, that we should read the emergence of the male barbecue chef.

Masculine Domesticity

Besides barbecuing, men were central participants in a wide assortment of family leisure activities in the 1940s and 1950s. Along with family outings, coaching youth sports, and hobbies like model-train building, barbecuing was one of a variety of masculine endeavours amidst the relative cornucopia of postwar family leisure. The period's increased time for, and emphasis upon, leisure fit in with longer-term changes in ideologies of fatherhood. In these narratives, the "new father" took more interest in matters of daily family life, including leisure-oriented child care and the psycho-sexual development of sons and daughters. Such developments did not represent a change in men's position as breadwinners, but expanded fatherhood's realm into new, more domestic, areas.[3]

2 On the place of fathers in postwar domestic life, see, Robert Rutherdale, "Fatherhood and Masculine Domesticity During the Baby Boom: Consumption and Leisure in Advertising and Life Stories," in *Family Matters: Papers in Post-Confederation Canadian Family History*. Lori Chambers and Edgar André Montigny, eds. (Toronto, 1998): 309-33; "Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory: Breadwinning and Male Parenting on a Job Frontier, 1945-1966," in *Gender and History and Canada*. Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld, eds. (Toronto, 1996), 357-75; Owram, *Born at the Right Time*.

3 There is some question as to whether notions of fatherhood that Robert Griswold has described for the United States as the "new fatherhood" also developed in Canada before World War Two. On the origins of the "new fatherhood" in Canada, see Cynthia Comacchio, "'A Postscript for Father': Defining a New Fatherhood in Postwar Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 78 No. 3 (September 1997):385-408. For studies which treat postwar parenting and fatherhood more generally see, Neil Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television* (Toronto, 1997); Owram, *Born at the Right Time*; Mona Gleason, "Psychology and the Construction of the 'Normal' Family in Postwar Canada, 1945-1960," *Canadian Historical Review* 78 No.3 (1997):442-77; "Disciplining Children, Disciplining Parents"; Rutherdale, "Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory"; "Fatherhood and Masculine Domesticity During the Baby Boom"; Katherine Arnup, *Education for Motherhood: Advice for Mothers in Twentieth-Century Canada* (Toronto, 1994); Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams."

In fact, the postwar father was not altogether "new." Increasingly, gender historians have been lured towards men's household activities, towards tantalizing and perplexing evidence of what Margaret Marsh has labelled "masculine domesticity." This historiographical movement follows the work of Catherine Hall and Leonore Davidoff. Their study of the early nineteenth-century English middle-class, *Family Fortunes*, challenges the usefulness of a strict and literal reading of separate spheres ideology to convey the complexity of women's and men's lives. For our purposes, they point towards the interpenetration of public and private as relational categories. They urge us to inquire into the process whereby the public/private dichotomy is created. Americans Robert Griswold and Michael Kimmel follow up these insights in examining the place of domesticity in ideologies of fatherhood and masculinity, respectively. Both recognise that by treating breadwinning as the meta-narrative of fatherhood, we obscure the way fathers have been both public and private figures as well as the power relations that have worked to make this complex social position appear one-dimensional.[4]

Twentieth-century Canadian historians have similarly commented on the inadequacy of breadwinning discourses to wholly capture the history of fatherhood. Historians such as Suzanne Morton and Joy Parr note that men's domestic travails have often been labelled as "help" to distinguish them from similar activities performed by women. To explain this linguistic posturing in the context of 1920s Halifax, Morton argues that "there was no language available to recognize the male contribution to domestic production" so men's gardening, hunting, and alcohol manufacturing were said to be "hobbies" or "leisure activities." Morton's and others attempts to understand the relationship between men's wage labour and domestic life are still tentative, certain that there is more to be told, uncertain how to proceed. As one gender historian notes, "There is clearly something more to the family man than the imagery of economic man can comprehend, something more complicated governing his relations with the

4 Margaret Marsh, "Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity, 1870-1915," *American Quarterly* 40 (June 1988): 165-86; "From Separation to Togetherness: The Social Construction of Domestic Space in American Suburbs, 1840-1915," *Journal of American History* 76 (September 1989): 506-27; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago, 1987); Robert Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A History* (New York, 1993); Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York, 1996). Other important works that contribute to this literature include John Tosh, "Domesticity and Manliness in the Victorian Middle Class: The Family of Edward White Benson," in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800*. Michael Roper and John Tosh eds. (London and New York, 1991), 44-73; Nancy Cott, "On Men's History and Women's History," in *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*. Mark Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds. (Chicago, 1990); Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 No.1 (1988): 9-39.

others in his household, both female and male, than his relation to the market alone can explain."[5]

This paper attends to the "something more" of the family man implicated in barbecuing's commercial speech. Cookbook writers, journalists, retailers, and advertisers packaged a particular image of domestic masculinity to sell along with the barbecue. But bringing men into domestic matters was not straightforward. Men's barbecuing raised eyebrows. Many agreed with the author of a 1955 *Maclean's* exposé on outdoor cooking who described the phenomenon as "weird" and "odd."[6] Even so, sellers of barbecue culture prepared themselves for such doubters. They went to great lengths to convince Canadians that barbecuing was an acceptable masculine leisure pursuit. Barbecuing's commercial speech did not merely replicate a routine designation of some pre-existing masculine essence. The intensity of efforts to masculinise the barbecue belies the naturalness claimed for outdoor cooking's masculinity. Instead, barbecuing's commercial speech presented, to use Foucault's terms, a "proliferation of discourse" – a veritable orgy of linguistic posturing that linked outdoor cooking to symbols of virile masculinity and manly leisure.[7]

But why did domesticity form such a crucial part of this image of the postwar masculine good life? And how did creators of barbecuing's commercial speech sell masculine domesticity to postwar Canadians? To ask such questions is not to equate commercial speech with daily life. Daily interaction and understanding do not flow unproblematically from ad copy. Yet, to examine how commercial speech envisioned the link between masculinity and domesticity is crucial. Although the promotions of commercial speech could be modified, this discourse formed the basis of postwar Canada's barbecue culture.[8]

5 Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto, 1990), 90-92, 191, 200; Suzanne Morton, *Ideal Surroundings: Domestic Life in a Working-Class Neighbourhood in the 1920s* (Toronto, 1995), 129.

6 Thomas Walsh, "How to Cook Without a Stove," *Maclean's* (9 July 1955).

7 I borrow here from Foucault's insights into the "repressive hypothesis" of Victorian sexuality. He argues that an excitable and interested "incitement to discourse" lay behind Victorian prohibitions, warnings, and regulations on sexual matters. See, Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* translated by Robert Hurley (New York, 1978). In the case of the barbecue, we can see that the elaborate rituals, language, and humour of barbecuing's commercial speech worked in a similar fashion. At the same time as this discourse refuted men's incorporation into feminine domesticity, the intensity of its refusal and the meanings of its privileged point both to the existence of men's domesticity and to a language that sought to make it masculine.

8 In this paper, I examine barbecuing through what I refer to as "commercial speech." I include in this definition sources that might not otherwise be considered "commercial." My concern is with the manner by which the barbecue was sold as a cultural concept. Advertisements in catalogues and newspapers were one way the barbecue was sold. But cookbooks that added new sections on "Outdoor Cooking" and journalists who expounded on the eccentricities of the new fad were also essential in the selling process. Together they presented potential buyers and casual onlookers with a language which, although it could be taken up, rejected, or distorted, nonetheless formed the initial framework through which barbecuing was understood.

Making the Barbecue Masculine

The barbecue's entry into Canadian backyards followed a two-stage process. The federal government's *1947 Emergency Exchange Conservation Act* restricted imports of domestic appliances and other allegedly "luxury" consumer products, barbecues included. Accordingly, Canadians who wished to enjoy outdoor cooking in the late 1940s were largely limited to building their own permanent brick and cement barbecues. "How to" articles in Canadian *Home and Gardens*, *Home Building*, and *Handy Man's Home Manual* provided substantial promotion of this fad. But although such articles boasted how easily the average family man could build such contraptions, it was not until import restrictions were lifted in the early 1950s that the cultural phenomenon of backyard cooking became firmly established in Canada.[9]

The extent of the move to outdoor cooking is difficult to discern. Unlike electric stoves, census takers and other statisticians of family commodities did not regularly track rates of barbecue ownership. Even if such records were gathered, they may not have included home built barbecues or the use made of picnic sites and campground firepits. Despite these limitations, we can uncover the barbecue's cultural significance in other areas. Retailers and manufacturers, for example, regularly reported boom sales. An Ontario home barbecue building company reported in 1955 that "for every barbecue [we] built ten years ago, [we] build a hundred today."[10] Cookbooks added new sections on "Outdoor Cookery" and "Outdoor Meals" to their regular list of chapters. In 1959, Sears made grilling central to its advertising strategy, devoting the cover of its summer catalogue to the barbecue. [11] It is safe to say that by the late 1950s barbecuing's commercial speech had grilled its way onto the Canadian consciousness.

9 Joy Parr, "Gender, Keynes, and Reconstruction," Paper presented to the Department of History, Simon Fraser University, 1998; "How to Build Your Own Barbecue," *Canadian Home and Gardens* (June 1948); "The Barbecue Anyone Can Build," *Canadian Home and Gardens* (May 1949); "Barbecues for Outdoor Living," *Home Building* (June-July 1952); *Handyman's Home Manual* (New York, 1960).

10 "Barbecue Grills Pace Housewares Sales Rise," *Weekly Retail Memo*, 27 June 1955; "Food Chains Plan Big Outdoor Eating Promotions," *Weekly Retail Memo*, 4 June 1956; "'Outdoor Dining Room' to Spur Summer Food Sales," *Weekly Retail Memo*, 17 June 1957; Walsh, "How to Cook Without a Stove." Published by the Vancouver Sun, the *Weekly Retail Memo* was a digest of news from publications in the United States and Canada relevant to retailers who might wish to advertise in the paper.

11 Cookbooks which followed this trend include, *The Ogilvie Cook Book* (Toronto, 1957); Nellie Lyle Pattinson, *Canadian Cook Book*, revised by Helen Wattie and Elinor Donaldson (Toronto, 1961); Agnes Murphy, *The American Everyday Cookbook* (New York, 1955); *Dishes Men Like: New and Old Favorites, Easy to Prepare ... Sure to Please* (New York, 1952). Although some of these works were published in the United States, all were in use in Canada during the period covered by this paper. All cookbooks referred to in this paper are held in the collections of the Halifax Public Library, the Vancouver Public Library, and in the personal collections of Lynda Laton, Tena Neufeld, and the author.

Journalists, advertisers, and cookbook writers set priorities for certain aspects of barbecuing. In particular, sellers of barbecue culture found its location outside the home to be significant. *Maclean's* writer, Thomas Walsh, suggested a genetic link between masculinity and the outdoors as the reason for men's proclivity to pick up the barbecue tongs. He noted that, "one theory for the increasing number of male cooks is simply that barbecuing is done outdoors, which is man's natural domain. It's the same inherited impulse that makes him take over at a corn roast." Many advertisers backed up Walsh, consistently describing outdoor cooking, which primarily included meals served in the relatively domestic suburban backyard, as qualitatively distinct from cooking done inside the home.[12]

The barbecue was also potentially rustic and old-fashioned. The *Art of Barbecue and Outdoor Cooking* went out of its way to note that grilling was "an age-old method of preparing meat." Others contrasted this "age-old" process with the exigencies of modern life. Unlike cooking done by homemakers in a modern kitchen, barbecuing hearkened back to an earlier time. According to Tom Riley, author of *How to Build and Use Your Own Outdoor Kitchen*, "It seems, along with a rocket soon to the moon, we want the goodness of a simple thing – the heartiness and friendliness of outdoor cooking." For Riley, the bustle of modern life explained men's barbecuing:

> The time was when a fellow cooked a meal over an open fire just plain and simply because he had to. When he received a chance to eat elsewhere, any kind of chance, he dropped everything and ran - his one fear he might be late. But the world does change. In these hurried days of supersonic aircraft and pushbutton kitchens, amidst the myriad of marvelous things we possess, the same fellow has no desire to hurry out to dinner alongside the superhighway. Instead, he is tantalized by the idea of donning a chef's cap and leisurely barbecuing a sizzling supper in the backyard.

In this vein, the barbecue represented a brief respite from modern life and, presumably, modern gender roles as well.[13]

Those who sought out historical precedent for men cooking over fire took the imagined nature of barbecuing's rustic lineage to its furthest extremes.

12 Walsh, "How to Cook Without a Stove"; See also, *Eaton's Summer Catalogue* (1960), 10-11; *Sears Spring and Summer Catalogue* (1959), 448; [Halifax] *Chronicle-Herald*, 15 June 1956, p.14.

13 Tested Recipe Institute, *The Art of Barbecue and Outdoor Cooking* (New York, 1958), 22; Tom Riley, *How to Build and Use Your Own Outdoor Kitchen* (Chicago, 1953), 3-4. Seeming to contradict Riley's argument that families wanted to flee the superhighway at mealtime, Andrew Hurley has traced the transformation and growth of roadside diners into family restaurants in postwar America. See, Andrew Hurley, "From Hash House to Family Restaurant: The Transformation of the Diner and Post-World War II Consumer Culture," *Journal of American History* (March 1997): 1282-1308.

Cookbook writers with an eye on the past found no paucity of historical barbecue chefs. The *Canadian Cook Book* credited the cave man for this "very popular form of cookery." Then, the culinary expert turned historian went on to trace a more recent, thought still distant, ancestry: "Some of the most efficient barbecues can still be seen in the remains of medieval castles where great spits held suckling pigs, fowl, and all forms of succulent meats over coals of enormous hearths." Moving south and east, the origins of the shish kebab received similar treatment. *The Art of Barbecue and Outdoor Cooking* told its readers that "Long, long ago Armenian soldiers and migrating mountain folk speared pieces of wild game or lamb on their swords and roasted it over a roaring camp fire. This they called 'shish kebob' meaning skewered pieces of meat." With a slight geographical twist, another writer claimed the shish kebob was " . . . a Turkish term for roasting food over a fire on the point of a sword. . . ." What had changed since the ancient Turks and Armenians? "Today, metal skewers replace swords. And, many more foods such as fish, vegetables and even fruits are skewered to add interest to the menu." Lest North Americans feel left out of barbecue history, Tom Riley asserted that "the American Indian of the east coast was doing a fair job with a spit long before Columbus." Later, Riley brought many of these themes together. "Luckily for our times," he mused,

> there were some blessed persons throughout the ages of outdoor cooking who took an interest in their campfires. They experimented. The native who first roasted on a spit, his friend who tried a pit. The Chinese epicurean who first basted a fowl in a low chimney, the fellow who first broiled over charcoal, the soldier who stuck a combination of meat and vegetables on his sword for the first shishkebab – slowly throughout the ages they found the rudiments of good barbecuing.[14]

To recall barbecuing's ancient lineage in this way became part of the genre of writing on outdoor cooking. These were not serious attempts to historicise the barbecue. Instead, journalists and cookbook writers made sense of men's outdoor cooking by invoking its history in terms redolent of muscular and military manhood.

Meat was key to such invocations. Throughout the 1950s almost no visual image of a barbecue was complete without the requisite steak, hamburger, or pork chop. Journalists' and cookbook writers' language complimented the visual imagery, suggesting hot dogs, hamburgers, deluxe steaks, individual steaks, and chops as the ideal grilling foods. One cookbook established a hierarchy of food to be served at a barbecue, with meat at the top: "Usually when a complete meal is being served outdoors, it is the meat course that is barbe-

14 *Canadian Cook Book*, 193; *The Art of Barbecue and Outdoor Cooking*, 86; Walsh, "How to Cook Without a Stove," 41; Riley, *How to Build and Use Your Own Outdoor Kitchen*, p.4-5.

cued, perhaps with one or more vegetables. When serving a crowd, unless the barbecue is equipped with a spit, it is often impossible to accommodate more than the meat over the fire box." In this listing, vegetables could be accommodated but only if there was room. [15]

For obvious reasons, Canada Packers sought to strengthen the association between meat and barbecuing. In the summer of 1955, the company offered a free portable brazier to consumers who purchased a specified amount of their canned meat products, including beef stew, bologna, beans with wieners, and Klik pork luncheon meat. In the image accompanying the offer, a smiling apron-clad man serves a Fred-Flinstone-size steak to an appreciative female onlooker, suggesting that Canada Packers could continue its service to the virile, meat-hungry new barbecue owner. Similarly, the cover of Canadian Tire's 1961 summer catalogue unabashedly connected red meat with manly virility. Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, Canadian Tire catalogue covers hosted a series of cartoons with the same stock characters and stock plots. Each centred on the efforts of a white, middle-aged man chasing after, and making sexual advances upon, a much younger, "full-bodied" woman (usually blonde). In the barbecue rendition of this postwar misogynistic male fantasy, the older man serves a large T-bone steak to an admiring younger woman. Two twenty-something-year-old men stare on incredulously, looking back and forth between the woman's succulent steak and the hot dogs they had received.[16] Through this overt symbolism, advertisers asserted a direct relationship between meat, barbecuing, and virile heterosexual masculinity.

Advertisers assured potential owners that the physical structure of the barbecue was just as masculine as the meat it was designed to grill. The "tough" descriptions of barbecue advertisements are noteworthy for their mere repetitiveness. "Heavy steel," "sturdy steel," and "heavy-gauge steel" were the descriptors of choice. An advertisement for *Eaton's Spring/Summer Catalogue* provides a representative flavour: "Top . . . is made of heavy-gauge aluminum to be completely rust proof. Firebox is a durable stainless steel. Grill, spit and supporting uprights are steel finished in gleaming nickel plate. Legs and wheels are of braced steel in baked-on enamel finish with cross braces."[17] Eaton's promised prospective buyers that this was a sturdy contraption that would hold up under extreme conditions. The type of steel with which a barbecue was constructed was undoubtedly important in determining both its effectiveness and its

15 "Let's Have a Picnic ... and Make it a Success," [Halifax] *Chronicle-Herald* 18 June 1954, p.16; *Canadian Cook Book*; [Halifax] *Chronicle-Herald*, 7 June 1955, p.7.

16 [Halifax] *Chronicle-Herald*,7 June 1955, p.7; *Canadian Tire Summer Catalogue* (1961).

17 *Eaton's Spring/Summer Catalogue* (1954), 548. For other examples, see, *Sears Summer Catalogue* (1953), 35-36; *Eaton's Summer Catalogue* (1959), 187; [Halifax] *Chronicle-Herald*, 15 June 1956, p.14; [Halifax] *Chronicle-Herald*,19 June 1959, p.14.

longevity. But advertiser's rhetoric of strength and durability sought to reassure consumers about more than the equipment's functionality. Eaton's 1954 spring/summer catalogue boasted that a "light weight" barbecue, ideal for trips away from home, was still capable of a "man's sized job of outdoor cooking."[18]

Advertisers went on to gender the movement of the barbecue's "heavy" and "sturdy" parts. Unlike advertisements for the modern electric stove, barbecuing's commercial speech did not describe their product's machine-like functions in easy to understand language. Instead, with barbecues, a "crank mechanism" worked to adjust heat control by raising and lowering the "extra heavy grid."[19] Unlike the celebrated easy, modern dials on the electric stove, the barbecue worked with "cranks." Sociologist Susan Ormrod found a similar tactic at work in the gendering of technical commodities in 1980s Britain. Jargon-filled language prevailed with allegedly masculine items, while advertisers employed comprehensible and non-expert language to describe products deemed feminine.[20] In our case, barbecuing's pseudo-industrial language differentiated it from stoves and other "feminine" cooking appliances in the home.

These linguistic devices were also used for barbecue utensils. Such items were often labelled "tools." An advertisement accompanying a *Canadian Home and Gardens* article on barbecue culture listed, "five members of a gadget set, namely large fork, soup ladle, flapjack flipper, vegetable spoon, spoon for odd jobs. . . . The last item is a real old-fashioned butcher knife for carving steaks. . . ."[21] This description boasts a number of gender assumptions. First, the advertisement labelled the group a "gadget set" despite the fact that all of its objects were relatively common household items. As well, the butcher knife's "old-fashioned" status conveyed the image of barbecuing's rusticity. In this way, advertisements inserted a cultural melange of masculine symbols into the language of barbecuing, they distinguished between a butcher knife used to carve a grilled T-bone from a butcher knife used to carve an oven-broiled T-bone.

Cookbook writers extended these distinctions to include the barbecue cook's clothing. Advertisements often depicted men clad in apron, chef's hat, and, sometimes, heat-protecting mitts. The inclusion of the chef's hat cast allusions to another acceptable male cook, the fine-dining chef. In fact, writers

18 *Eaton's Spring/Summer Catalogue* (1954), 548.

19 *Eaton's Summer Catalogue* (1959), 187; *Eaton's Summer Catalogue* (1960), 10-11. Joy Parr explores the gendered tactics of electric range manufacturers and salesmen in Ontario between 1950 and 1955 in her, "Shopping for a Good Stove: A Parable About Gender, Design and the Market," in *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980*. Joy Parr, ed. (Toronto, 1995), 75-97.

20 Susan Ormrod, "'Let's Nuke the Dinner': Discursive Practices of Gender in the Creation of a Cooking Process," in *Bringing Technology Home: Gender and Technology in a Changing Europe*. Cynthia Cockburn and Ruza Furst Dilic eds. (Buckingham and Philadelphia, 1994), 42-58.

21 Advertisement accompanies, Frederick Manning, "Summer Eating and Some...," *Canadian Home and Gardens* (August 1948).

often used this title in tandem with images of men in the customary duck hat or toque. The *Canadian Cook Book* highlighted protective needs to further distinguish barbecue dress from apparently similar items worn by housewives. It warned that, due to the dangers of cooking over fire, barbecue apparel should consist of "a large, heavy, non-frilly apron and thick oven mitts." Such warnings did not normally accompany other sections of the cookbook.[22] Finally, advertisements presented barbecue attire as humorous. Lest readers miss the comical association, manufacturers emblazoned sayings such as "call me cookie," "hotdog," or "wot'll it be" on aprons as a reminder. Sears summed up the appropriate barbecue costume in its 1959 summer catalogue; beside a tiny picture of barbecue garb, the description read, "Asbestos palm mitts, white duck hat, apron. Humorous."[23]

Commercial speech presented humour, especially self-deprecating humour, as central to barbecue culture. Irony was the tool of choice. Articles on outdoor cooking overflowed with images of men beaming proud smiles one moment and dousing a raging fire the next. Journalist James Bannerman openly admitted his own incompetence:

> All I know about barbecuing could be tattooed in large letters on the south end of a thick gnat .... [Barbecuing] sounds easy and I don't doubt it would be to a person of normal intelligence. It so happens, however, that I am not a person or normal intelligence and for a while it looked as if I was never going to get anything more out of my barbecue than the odd puff of pallid smoke.[24]

In taking on this humorous tone, Bannerman fit his work into a wider genre of writing on masculine domesticity in postwar Canada. The image of the hapless father recurred in a variety of 1940s and 1950s media. This genre portrayed men as more than adequate breadwinners but ridiculed their status in the home. For example, in a 1952 *Maclean's* article, "Timetable of a Father Looking After the Children," a fictitious mother leaves home at 7:25 for a meeting on child guidance, instructing her husband to put the two children to bed 20 minutes later at 7:45. A carnivalesque evening ensues in which hapless dad is stripped

22 Actually, the section on pressure cooking did give various warnings to housewives about how to avoid an explosion. However, unlike in the section on outdoor cookery, the authors do not suggest wearing protective clothing in case of such an explosion!

23 *Canadian Cook Book; Eaton's Summer Catalogue* (1959), 187; [Halifax] *Chronicle-Herald*, 15 June 1956, p.14; [Halifax] *Chronicle-Herald*,19 June 1959, p.5; *Canadian Tire Summer Catalogue* (1961); Walsh, "How to Cook Without a Stove"; *Sears Summer Catalogue* (1959), 448.

24 James Bannerman, "Me and My Barbecue: Adventures in barbecuing, past and present - a harrowing tale with a happy ending," *Canadian Home and Gardens* (May 1949). On a similar theme, see Robert Allen, "But I *Don't Want* the New Leisure," *Maclean's* (23 Nov. 1957); Walsh, "How to Cook Without a Stove."

of all dignity in a blatantly incompetent, though energetic, attempt to put his children to bed. The kids, the woman next door, and, presumably, the reader, mock father's feeble efforts to assert control in domestic matters. Yet, ultimately, this ritualised mocking did not challenge men's position in the family. Instead, it reasserted that men's "true" position, the position in which they were not mocked, lay outside the home.[25] By treating men's barbecuing as a joking matter, barbecuing's commercial speech appealed to this wider discourse that linked domestic incompetence with normal masculinity.

Barbecuing and Postwar Leisure

In order to sell barbecues and barbecue products, advertisers enticed men to try barbecuing because of the enjoyment they would receive. Despite the fact that men would be cooking a meal, something considered work for women, barbecuing's commercial speech maintained that grilling steaks was "fun." The language was repetitive: "Enjoy Outdoor Living," "It's fun to cook and eat on the patio," "Outdoor meals can provide enjoyment and good eating. . . ."[26] Yet, in claiming the barbecue as "fun" entertainment, advertisers employed a gendered strategy to neatly situate the barbecue within postwar family leisure. They incessantly sought to enlarge what could be a very fine distinction between leisure and work in barbecuing.

A number of journalists suggested that barbecuing required an altered, more relaxed, dining etiquette. For one commentator, to eat a meal "'picnic style' included a consideration of all the elements of informality plus a change of atmosphere and even a different type of menu." Writing in the Halifax *Chronicle-Herald*, Steven Ellingston agreed that the "relaxed, camp-out, carefree attitude" was key. According to yet another journalist, "The barbecue has added its weight to the general breakdown of formality in the home, which [has] daily become more functional and less formal. . . . People who a generation ago wouldn't have eaten in their shirt sleeves are now sitting around barbecues in shorts, bathing suits, pedal pushers and blue jeans." Not all appreciated the new barbecue dining style. *Canadian Home and Gardens* food columnist, Frederick Manning, criticised barbecuing's effect on social more. "If it's all the same to you," he appealed to readers in August 1948, "I'll cook mine in the kitchen and carry it out, wind and weather permitting, but only if the dining room is knee deep in a paper and painting job. After all, what is wrong with

25 Barry Mather, "Timetable of Father Looking After the Children," *Maclean's* (15 Jan. 1952). See also, Robert Allen, "How to Endure a Father," *Maclean's* (31 Jan. 1959); "You Too Can be a Perfect Parent," *Maclean's* (15 Mar. 1951); "How Children Remodel Their Parents," *Maclean's* (6 Aug. 1955); Victor Maxwell, "So Daddy's a Dope!" *Maclean's* (15 June 1947).

26 *Eaton's Summer Catalogue* (1960), 10-11; *Canadian Tire Spring and Summer Catalogue* (1960), 104; *Canadian Cook Book*, v; *The Art of Barbecue and Outdoor Cooking*, 6; *Ogilvie Cook Book*, 219.

a dining table in summer anyway?"[27] By making dinnertime into leisure-time, barbecuing upset traditionalists like Manning and established its gendered distinctiveness.

To further differentiate barbecuing from the more mundane forms of cookery, journalists and advertisers maintained that the family barbecue was an "event"; a special, and irregular, occurrence. Advertisers envisioned and promoted a family eating schedule supplemented by occasional bouts of male interest and involvement. For example, in 1958, Simpson's told wives of prospective barbecue cooks that the barbecue appliances they advertised were "for his outdoor cooking *sprees*."[28] Others presented the barbecue as an ideal way to entertain guests or celebrate a family outing. The1957 promotional film, *Barbecue Impromptu*, celebrated the wonders of stainless steel through the fictional occasion of a couple preparing a barbecue dinner party for the husband's business associates. In this simulation, the dinner provided a direct link between the man's public business life and his private home life. Both husband and wife shared the responsibilities for preparing the meal for the guests. While the husband greeted his guests and operated the barbecue itself, his wife prepared most of the meal.[29] Whether celebrated as a dinner party or a family meal, commercial speech highlighted the specialness of men taking part in meal preparation at a barbecue.

This part-time cooperative spirit exemplified idealised notions of postwar gender relations. A *Canadian Home and Gardens* article suggested Sunday morning as a time to "gather the home circle around [the barbecue] and have brunch. . . . Somebody can make coffee while dad flips the flapjacks, scrambles the eggs, or grills the bacon and the youngsters take over fixing the table or distracting the pup from too close attention." Another writer claimed that the "ideal picnic will be turned into a 'family game' if everyone has particular duties and responsibilities. Dad is responsible for the fire and icing of the beverages and perishables: the girls help mom with the food and the young man takes care of the game equipment, bats and balls, portable radio, playing cards and perhaps the paper plates, cups and silverware." In these scenarios, the barbecue meant more than just the father fixing the fire, it represented collective

27 "Let's Have a Picnic," [Halifax] *Chronicle-Herald*; Walsh, "How to Cook Without a Stove," 43; Steve Ellingston, "Barbecue Table, Benches Make Eating Out Easy," [Halifax] *Chronicle-Herald*, 14 June 1958, p.11; Frederick Manning, "Summer Eating and Some..." *Canadian Home and Gardens*.

28 [Halifax] *Chronicle-Herald*, 14 June 1958, p.18 [emphasis mine].

29 National Archives of Canada, ISN-25327, *Barbecue Impromptu*, International Nickel Co. of Canada, 1957. Others have commented upon the distinction between family men and single men both in business and in community affairs. See, Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*; Kimmel, *Manhood in America*; Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*.

effort and collective enjoyment. The change in the sex of the cook was, therefore, only one part of a wider narrative of changing values and mores.[30]

As part of this collectivist and informal narrative, advertisers and cookbook writers cast the barbecue chef's responsibilities in a language of sly humour. One cartoon depicted an apron-clad barbecue chef taking care of the after dinner cleanup by spraying water from a garden hose onto dishes piled up in a children's plastic pool. Thomas Walsh's description of what men did to prepare a meal on the barbecue reflected a similar lackadaisical attitude: "A man who ten years ago did nothing about supper but sniff under the saucepan lids and who wouldn't dream of setting a table, today doesn't mind building a fire and putting some meat on it." Walsh played on the assumption that not many men would mind the not-so-arduous task of "building a fire and putting some meat on it." Here the discourse on leisure made a double movement; barbecuing was leisure for men but work for women. Walsh went on to quote a suburban housewife on her husband's new-found love of barbecuing:

> My husband takes care of all our barbecue meals. He comes home and starts right in. "Get me the garlic salt. Hand me the tongs. Get me the fork. Hand me a bay leaf. Put some more charcoal on the fire. Bring the plates over here." Holy cow! There's more to cooking than holding a couple of pork chops over the fire.[31]

The truncated cooking responsibilities suggested here made barbecuing truly appear, as the advertisements boasted, "easy."

Conclusions

Barbecuing's commercial speech was a prescriptive discourse. We should not expect it to offer realistic descriptions of daily life. And when cookbooks and popular magazines described barbecue culture, it appeared as a uniformly white, middle-class, and heterosexual phenomenon. The visual imagery, especially in high-end publications like *Canadian Home and Gardens*, presented idealised nuclear families in middle-class suburban backyards as the norm. In this way, barbecuing's commercial speech was part of a larger middle-class advertising discourse that offered up a homogenized world of postwar abundance.

We can see that not all participants in barbecue culture accepted unproblematically the rhetorical flourishes of its commercial speech. Certainly,

30 "Let's Have a Picnic," [Halifax] *Chronicle-Herald*; "Every Meal's a Picnic ... With a Barbecue!" *Canadian Home and Gardens* (May 1949). On the cooperative nature of barbecuing, see also, Manning, "Summer Eating and Some...," *Canadian Home and Gardens*; *Canadian Cook Book*; *The Art of Barbecue and Outdoor Cooking*, 149; *How to Build and Use Your Own Outdoor Kitchen*, 12-13.

31 Walsh, "How to Cook Without a Stove," 43.

Maclean's satirist Robert Allen disputed the benefits of barbecuing as relaxing leisure. In a brief moment of seriousness, Allen decried leisure that focussed on "doing": "If we're going to keep shortening the work week," he argued in *Maclean's* in 1957, "we should start realizing that we can't fill up the other end with hobbies. . . . Relaxation is a lot like happiness: the harder we chase it, the farther it moves away."[32] For Allen, barbecuing and other masculine hobbies required too much hustle.

At the same time, Allen still dismissed the significance of the new postwar domestic leisure; he argued that barbecuing was not leisure, but neither did it equal men's real work. Allen's dismissal of barbecuing's significance may lead historians to do the same, to treat the barbecue as an insignificant aside to 1950s masculinity. Certainly, other household items such as cars, lawnmowers, and fix-it tools appear to have been more pivotal in men's lives. But a close reading of barbecuing's commercial speech militates against such an interpretation. The barbecue's insignificance, its status as a humorous side-bar to the "real" story of men's breadwinning obligations, did not stem automatically from its material conditions. To read the barbecue as an inconsequential aberration is to accept the myth of barbecuing sold by cookbook writers, journalists, and advertisers.

Alternatively, we can read in barbecuing's commercial speech a proliferation of discourse on the subject of masculinity and domesticity in 1950s Canada, not, as popular lore might hold, an absence of such discourse. Taking our cue from Foucault's insights into the fascination behind Victorian sexual repression, we can see that the incitement to speak of barbecuing as humorous and insignificant formed a discourse of disavowal and repudiation. The sellers of barbecue culture were incessantly concerned about domesticity. Advertisements and cartoons may have been lighthearted, but they were also earnest. The creators of barbecuing's commercial speech sought to assuage any anxiety caused by the transgression inherent to barbecue culture by enfolding it in a masculine discourse of dismissal.

What does the existence of this discourse suggest about gender relations in the 1950s? How do we read such refusals? First, our uncovering of the intensity of barbecuing's commercial speech fits into an emerging revisionist history of the 1950s.[33] Here, we find the gendered insecurities of the decade. Where

32 Robert Allen, "But I *Don't Want* the New Leisure," *Maclean's* (23 Nov. 1957).

33 The conservatism of the immediate postwar decades is a point of debate in many recent Canadian works. See, Owram, *Born at the Right Time*; Jeff Keshen, "Getting it Right the Second Time Around: The Reintegration of Canadian Veterans of World War II," in *The Veterans Charter and Post-World War II Canada*. Peter Neary and J.L. Granatstein, eds. (Montreal and Kingston, 1998), 62-84; "Revisiting Canada's Civilian Women During World War II," *Histoire Sociale/ Social History* 30 No.60 (Nov. 1997): 239-66; Adams, *The Trouble With Normal*. In the United States, the debates around this revisionist approach are nicely gathered in Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver*.

would men fit into the postwar era's domestic life? How could men's changing place in the family be reconciled with normative ideals? Far from being a period of static gender relations, barbecuing's commercial speech demonstrates that cultural negotiation and conflict underlay the decade's social life. We like to remember this period as a time of placid tranquillity but contemporaries more often described a world of rapid change.

Barbecuing's commercial speech points out the direction of some of these changes. The Victorian division between public and private, however tenuous and artificial, had supported cultural divisions between masculine and feminine. But as suffragists, women war workers, and others assailed this cultural construct, and the ideology of gender relations it supported, individuals looked elsewhere to shore up their belief in the naturalness of gender difference. If the division between public and private had eroded, what replaced it? Can we view men's involvement in domestic matters as one small step in a progressive evolution? Should we replace the previous history of postwar gender relations that characterised the period as a step backward with a new history emphasising slow but steady advancement? Our exploration of gender and barbecuing again points in a different direction. Gender hierarchies based on the division between public and private had faltered but new dichotomies took their place. New gendered divisions between leisure and work redefined and re-articulated older divisions between public and private and masculine and feminine. Ultimately, the story of barbecuing and postwar gender relations is not a tale of simple progression or descent, but a complex narrative of cultural change.