



Canada



Montreal 1976

# A SUMMER OF FEASTING BEFORE THE INDIAN SUMMER



## Olympic preparation for feeding the athletes

On 4 September 1973, the organizing committee president and commissioner general for the Games of the XXI Olympiad, His Excellency C.O. Roger Rousseau, sent documentation to 130 National Olympic Committees asking them about catering for their athletes ahead of their stay in Montreal. Covering the principles of this catering, namely diet, food ration, calorie content, the types of food needed by the athletes and the typical menus and choices proposed for the main meals, the documentation also included a "brief" study into the eating habits of the main ethnic groups in the world. This study, which was in fact exhaustive, showed us, among other things, that the Spanish were the biggest eaters of kid and goat; the Germans of venison and wild boar; the Norwegians and Danes of dried or smoked veal; and the Arab countries of

by Daniel Robin



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lamb and mutton. For general meat consumption, beef was the favourite, well ahead of pork, lamb, veal, mutton, reindeer, rabbit, sausages, hare, venison, wild boar, kid and goat. In the bird and poultry popularity stakes, chicken was the clear winner, ahead of duck, turkey, goose, pigeon, partridge, pheasant, woodcock, grouse, squab, pullet, dove, wood pigeon, snipe and blackbird. The most impressive thing in this study is the number of seafood products it covered: around forty. We learned firstly that Canadians were mad on wall-eyed pike

and the Americans on swordfish; the Scandinavians on cod liver, cod, herrings and prawns prepared in any way: fresh, smoked, dried, salted or marinated. The most highly-prized international products were fresh prawns, shellfish, lobster, eel, herrings, crab, salmon, trout, pike, cod, crayfish, halibut, perch, anchovies, haddock, mackerel, carp, sole, marinated prawns, caviar, kippers, salted cod, dorado, turbot, calamar, octopus, dried cod, cod liver, smelt, sturgeon, fonito, smoked salmon, shad, abalone, wall-eyed pike, swordfish, dried and marinated prawns (and sardines?). A respectable number of vegetables, breads, salads, desserts and drinks were also looked at closely according to each ethnic group identified.

Why all this documentation, this consultation, this study? Yvon Dubois, who was mayor of this futuristic Olympic Village at the time, explains: "This consultation phase with the NOCs allowed us to establish the accuracy of the direction we were planning on adopting to achieve our objectives. These included developing the Olympic Village - the ideal place for creating a spirit approaching Coubertin's philosophy, a human environment which encourages fraternity, discovery, exchange and understanding through a way of life at the Village which sought to be different from previous Games through an original perception and conception of 32 services all working towards this goal, including the catering services and gastronomy". In an article which appeared on 31 July 1976, Olga Fikotova, who took part in five Olympic



*Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II having lunch with the athletes in the Olympic Village*



Games. wrote the following passage which neatly sums up the aims of such an approach: "The whole world meets at the Olympic Village. It is a unique treasure which belongs to the Olympic Games." Indeed, there is nowhere else in the world where so many nationalities can live together in peace and mutual respect. Speaking of originality, Yvon Dubois adds: "Innovation in several sectors of the Olympic Village (housing, accommodation, relations with delegations, leisure) helped to limit the costs of vandalism, which had been more than \$100,000 in Munich, to just \$13,000 in Montreal. The approach used to succeed in offering athletes and their entourage high quality nutrition while respecting our scheduled budget in 1974 Canadian dollars (CD 2,740,000 out of the total CD 11,970,000 budget for the Olympic Village: 23%) consisted of limiting costs. For this, we called on experts in high-quality catering services, like those at the Pentagon in Washington with their 26,000 daily lunches, to advise us on planning menus and physical, material, human and financial resources, to achieve these and do so as an official supplier; we rented equipment resold by the owners at an auction held after the Games on the actual site of the Olympic Village; and we found partners to supply foodstuffs. Not compartmentalizing the catering and not categorizing by continent was another innovation. Several national cuisines for which the costs were exorbitant at previous Games were dropped to leave a single cuisine and an international menu, a formula repeated several times since".

#### **Universal cuisine and blueberry pie**

This international menu where, every day, 85 different main courses and 18 desserts were offered, was supplemented by local specialities such as pancakes and French toast with maple syrup for breakfast, pea soup, meat pies and blueberry pies with maple syrup for lunch and dinner (see box). Five menus were



*(Right) Lord Killanin, then IOC President, in the Olympic Village cafeteria.*

offered on successive days from 1 July to 6 August 1976. Everything was done very carefully in the kitchen. Microbiologists performed 46 analyses on the food every day. A real laboratory. Nothing was left to chance. Even the local tap water, which could be too heavily chlorinated, was replaced with pure spring water supplied directly from the Laurentides to cook the rice.

#### **The lunch box**

Cold meals to take away could also be ordered the day before. The lunch box consisted of a lettuce sandwich, a buttered roll, a chicken thigh, a tomato, a packet of savoury crackers with an ounce of cheese, a packet of biscuits, a piece of fruit (plum, orange, pear; banana or black cherries), a milk pudding, milk or fruit juice, salt and pepper, mustard, ketchup or relish, a plastic knife, spoon and fork, a paper napkin and a moist tissue for wiping the hands.

The catering service at the Olympic Village could serve up to 12,000 meals at a time, and operated around the clock. The timetable was as follows: breakfast (6 a.m. to 11 a.m., peak time 10 a.m.); lunch (11 a.m. to 3 p.m., peak time 1.30 p.m.); dinner (3 p.m. to 9 p.m., peak time

9 p.m.); snacks (9 p.m. to 6 a.m., quiet period 2 a.m. to 5 a.m.).

The ticket prices for the cafeteria were: breakfast, \$2.50; lunch, \$4.75; dinner, \$4.75.

#### **Big feast at the Village**

645,000 meals were served at the cafeteria, of which 25,578 were for guests, 8,760 were at receptions and 7,202 were taken to eat at the competition venues. The record day was when 31,550 meals were served. All these meals catered for 1,376 women athletes, 5,159 male athletes, 259 female accompanying personnel, 2,793 male accompanying personnel, 500 journalists, 500 special guests and 3,000 members of the Olympic Village staff. Of these 3,000 members of staff, 1,036 worked in the 880 different positions within the catering services. 150 cooks and 165 staff who had already worked for chef Jean-Louis Secher or had been recommended to him worked in the kitchen. These cooks included various specialists: a Soviet, a Chinese, a Japanese, French and Canadians. The team was joined by ten or so foreign chefs to advise the athletes from their respective countries on which food was most suitable for them. Alcoholic drinks

were restricted to certain places like the international restaurant (beer and wine), but were served exceptionally in the cafeteria at the request of the foreign chefs in the cafeteria (particularly the French and Italian chefs). A traditional wine-drinking country, France kept a cellar in the Olympic Village: 3,000 bottles from regions from Bordeaux to Champagne.

### **Dining rooms to feed the world**

Three dining rooms offered seating for 3,200. The diners waited in two lines in 12 serving areas where 37 staff could serve 96 people a minute. At 1 p.m., the peak time, an average of 1,275 people came into the cafeteria. The record number was when 10,000 meals were served in 90 minutes (i.e. 111 meals a minute). Another record was when 2,000 steaks were cooked at a single sitting. Everything had been calculated to provide between 2,250 and 3,500 calories per meal and approximately 6,500 calories per day. It was seen that, even so, some big men easily exceeded 8,000 calories per day. Each athlete ate an average of 3.6 kg of food a day. What those responsible for managing the Village had not anticipated, however, was the phenomenal demand for fruit, as was noted

on 18 July in the daily report by the catering services. The diets which cut out protein and concentrated on carbohydrates certainly contributed to this. Six pieces of fruit per person per day had been predicted, but it was necessary to double the daily 'dose'. There was plenty of it. On 19 July, an athlete was seen with no fewer than 15 kiwis on his plate. The most important thing was knowing how to adapt. In dietetics, every cultural, religious and other need has to be met, which means providing a low-meat diet for Hindus while simultaneously offering a protein-rich diet of big steaks for the Americans.

### **Some eye-witness accounts**

The eating habits of some athletes are sometimes dictated more by superstition than by scientific criteria, like the athlete who said that she never ate cake before a competition as she had done so once, and had lost. As a result, in her view, cake was not good for athletes. While tucking in to a copious meal, the goalkeeper of the Canadian water polo team, Guy Leclerc, joked to journalist Tom Lapointe: "Some instructors will complain that you are treated too well where the food is concerned. as the portions

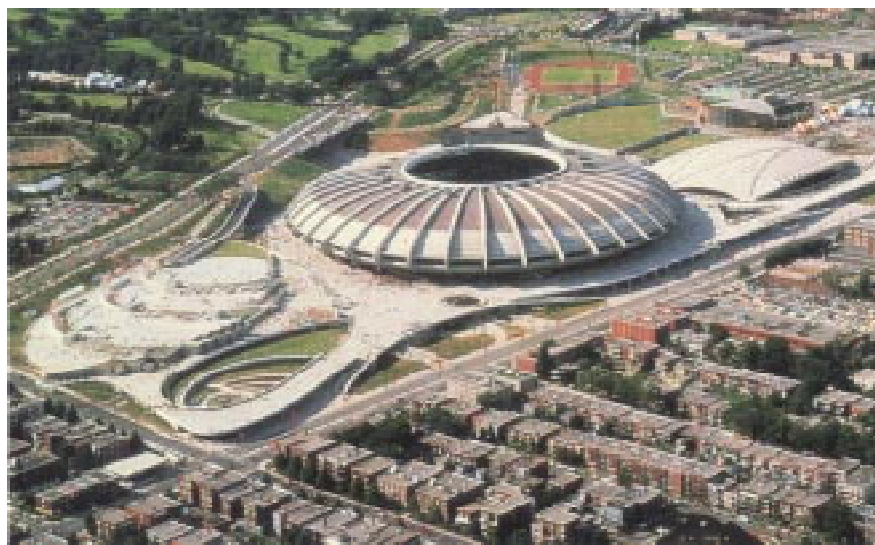
here are generous. You can 'load up' with what you like, as many times as you like." And boxer Camille Huard told the same journalist: "Having another soup, or two helpings of dessert is a sin. But it is too tempting not to." Another athlete recalls the abundance of food at the Village cafeteria, telling me: "It was fantastic. We were so free, so well received when we arrived at the restaurant. We could take what we liked. So much so that we were even tempted to take it out of the Village so that everyone could try it: our friends, our parents, the volunteers. We could eat what we liked, when we liked and as much as we liked. Everything was there: quality and choice. There was something for everyone 24 hours a day. But I always thought that there could have been a strategy in installing tables and benches with no backs. We could eat comfortably but without settling down for a feast. This was to avoid people spending too long eating."

### **Service à la carte**

The Olympic Village catering services went beyond the confines of the cafeteria, intended for the delegation members. Several partner catering points were located around the venue to distribute drinks, yoghurts, fruit, ice-creams, etc., including the refreshment kiosk which was open from 11 a.m. to 9.30 p.m. In addition to these, there was a café with a terrace with seating for 658 outside the international centre of the Olympic Village, open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., offering a choice of sandwiches and drinks to the occupants of the Village and to visitors. The international Rendez-vous, a restaurant with some 300 seats located in the international centre, offered visitors a cold and hot buffet from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. (the midday meal cost \$8.50 and the evening meal \$9.50). Finally, there was also the Village mayor's Auberge.

For Yvon Dubois, this Auberge "had been designed to encourage close contacts

*The Olympic Park*





between the heads of the delegations and between the liaison staff responsible for sounding out the different teams. In addition, a gastronomic restaurant 'La Médaille d'Or', offering a sophisticated and gastronomic Canadian menu, was available to the dignitaries who visited us (more than 1,000 political, religious, sports and business personalities)."

## The Menu

Soup of the day\*  
Consommé au porto \$1.00

Chilled fruit  
*Assiette parisienne*  
*Gratinée Ivoirnaise*  
\*Avacado stuffed with Alaska crab  
\$2.00

\*Bouquet of prawns \$1.75

Assorted cold cuts with garnish  
Salmon steak in mousseline sauce  
Lamb chops Vert-Pré  
Medallions of beef in bordelaise sauce  
Escalope of veal in mushroom sauce  
Grilled rib steak Maître d'Hôtel  
Lobster salad Bellevue

Potatoes Matchstick  
With parsley butter  
Roast

French beans with almonds  
Cauliflower à la Polonaise  
Tomato Provençale

Salad of the season  
Cheese board  
Petits-fours  
Beverage

Price: \$12.00  
\*indicates a supplement  
Province Tax 8% extra  
Service: 15%

Executive Chef: Pierre Bluteau, Executive Chef of the Quebec Institute of Tourism and the Hotel Trade. Master of gastronomy of the International Gastronomes Association.

\*Menu from the Médaille d'Or restaurant.

"As mayor, I received more than five invitations a day to attend receptions given by the different countries participating. Each nation offered its national dishes, prepared by our recognized establishments and their top chefs, and served in the best hotels, private clubs and famous restaurants. on boats and in consulates. My wife Jeannine and/or I attended almost all these receptions to avoid making a faux pas or creating 'diplomatic incidents'. as countries sometimes invited the leaders of other NOCs, who in turn invited them on another occasion. Generous sponsors like Addax and McDonald. celebrities like Jesse Owens, zealous NOC staff, volunteer consultants, valuable security advisers and devoted Olympic attachés were invited to the Beaver's Club, La Saulaie, Les Halles, Chez Bardet, Pierre de Coubertin, Le Castillon and the Mitoyen to sample our top gastronomy which was certainly comparable to that in Munich (Tandris, Aubergine, La Belle Epoque and Haux et Bauer), Rome (Ranieri, Eden and Del Ourso), Tokyo (Crescent). Mexico City (San Angel Inn) and Los Angeles (Jimmy's and Michael's). Memorable sumptuous receptions at the Montreal Games included the Soviet Union's in the afternoon on the boat Pushkin, and by chance in the evening of the same day, the one given by the United States; a strategy which was not just sporting but gastronomic. Unfortunately, many people were unable to go to the second one which we also appreciated."

There were 126 receptions at the Village for 9,010 guests. The VIP visitors to the cafeteria included Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II; Pierre-Elliott Trudeau, the Canadian Prime Minister; Robert Bourassa, the Prime Minister of Quebec; the Australian Prime Minister; the Spanish sports minister; Nancy Kissinger; the then IOC President Lord Killanin; Jean Drapeau, Mayor of Montreal; and V. Koval, vice president of the organizing committee of the Games of the XXII Olympiad in Moscow.

In addition, outside the Village at the competition sites the organizing committee set up 158 stands, 80 of which were at the Olympic stadium, 13 cafeterias and 10 bars.

### Other knowledgeable gastronomes: the journalists

The Desjardins Complex was the journalists' headquarters during the Olympic Games. The Main Press Centre was there with the press conference rooms which later became a cinema complex. The stage for world sport gave way to the cinema screen. The Desjardins Complex, designed with the harsh Canadian winters in mind, then contained a series of restaurants, some of which formed part of the newly opened Hotel Méridien. Here, too, there was an exceptional choice for all tastes. In addition to this 'intra-mural' profusion of restaurants and fast food, the Chinese quarter next to the Desjardins Complex offered a variety of food for gastronomes in need of exotic flavours and mild or strong taste sensations which the sweet and sour of Szechuan cooking does so well. The journalists, who often like small quiet places to get away from the press room, were happy to explore the small cafés which had started springing up in Montreal after the 1967 Expo, particularly in the Vieux-Montréal and the Latin Quarter.

### Montreal, cosmopolitan and gourmet

In 1976, there were no less than 6,000 restaurants in Montreal, more than 300 of which charged reasonable prices and could be found in good food guides. From the traditional Yorkshire pudding and roast beef of England to a local cuisine which had grown and matured since the early days of the colony, through the cooking of more than 30 countries whose citizens had made their home in this cosmopolitan city, visitors in 1976 had more than enough to satisfy their gourmet instincts. From their gastronomic dis-

coveries guided by the suggestions of different menus, they could enjoy a veritable Epicurean world tour: bagelach, sushi, sukiyaki, Peking duck, suckling pig, shahjahni, wienerschnitzel, moussaka, osso bucco, coq-au-vin, zarzuela de mariscos, raclette valaisanne, sakuska, or Quebec meat pie, without forgetting the seafood specialities (fish, shellfish and seafood) dominated by lobster and Atlantic and Pacific salmon, or the delicious and substantial steaks served in the many steak houses. All of this could be washed down by the best wines.

### **The Hélène de Champlain restaurant**

During the Games, the Hélène de Champlain restaurant, named after Montreal's grande dame, close to the rowing venue, delighted both the eyes

of its guests with the richness of its décor, and their tastebuds with the splendours of its table. A magnificent building in the style of a Normandy manor house, built in the 1930s partly to give work to those unemployed as a result of the economic crisis, the restaurant was renovated with a view to receiving the dignitaries attending the 1967 Expo. The pavilion of honour where the Exhibition commissioner received the world's great names, this magnificent palace of gastronomic delights lived up to its reputation during the universal gathering of sport in the summer of 1976.

### **The closing "Banquet"**

Everyone will recall this closing ceremony, where the Amerindians set up

wigwams in the colours of the Olympic rings. This jubilant celebration rapidly transferred downtown, where the entire Olympic crowd gathered for a closing party at the Desjardins Complex. More than 10,000 guests tucked in to the huge buffet. Each guest left with a souvenir product from one of the well-known Canadian distillers.

Perhaps the organizers hoped that, once the flame of the Games had been extinguished, the warm glow generated by the drink would spread around the earth, warming the lumberjack's limbs in the first chills of autumn, and bringing back the countless Olympic memories that the slightest titillation of the epigastrium can awaken. Does not the stomach treasure memories as fondly as the mind?

The guests left the Desjardins Complex and this summer festival carrying with

## **FIGURES AND FOOD (1 JULY-6 AUGUST)**

<b>FOOD</b>	<b>FIGURES</b>
Hamburgers	45,5 tonnes
Steaks	34 tonnes
Lamb	7 tonnes
Lamb and bacon	23 tonnes
Poultry	27 tonnes
Fish and shellfish	26 tonnes
Fresh and frozen vegetables	136 tonnes
Fruit	12 000 boxes
Potatoes	91 tonnes
Rolls	110 000
Various groceries	6 000 boxes
Milk	188 000 cartons (6 ounces)
Milk 2%	19 500 cartons

Skimmed milk	71 000 cartons
Milk chocolate	110 000 cartons
Yoghurts	183 000
Eggs	403 000
Ice-cream	60 000 litres
Concentrated fruit juice	115 boxes

<b>CUTLERY (disposable)</b>	<b>QUANTITY</b>
Knives	793 000
Soup spoons	725 000
Teaspoons	1 091 000
Forks	1 503 000

The refreshment kiosk situated in a different building from the cafeteria was open from 11 a.m. until 9 p.m., and served 3,500 customers. With its eight serving points, it alone got through 75

containers of Coca Cola concentrate; 75 containers of other soft drinks; 65,000 portions of ice-cream; 18,000 yoghurts; 10,000 portions of milk and 4,000 bottles of mineral water.

Among all these products, the athletes ate their way through 78,290 kilos of meat, 20,001 kilos of poultry, 12,888 kilos of fish and seafood, 17,736 pastries and 5,160 tarts and cakes.



them their Olympic colours and leaving behind the Canadians who would soon enjoy the colours of an Indian summer.

Menus offered on the 1st, 6th, 11th, 16th, 21st, 26th, 31st of July and 5th of August

### **Fruit and juices**

Oranges, citrus sections, apples, bananas, berries, cherries, melon, stewed prunes, fresh tomatoes. Orange, grapefruit, apricot, apple, grape or tomato juice.

### **Cereals**

Oatmeal, cream of wheat, assorted cold cereals, including fortified natural cereals

### **soup**

Borscht with sour cream

### **Eggs**

Boiled, poached, scrambled or fried eggs; omelettes (cheese, ham, mushroom, etc.)

### **Specialities**

Pancakes, French toast, waffles with Quebec maple syrup

### **Meat and fish**

Side bacon, Canadian back bacon, ham steak, link sausages, minced beef steak. Poached smoked cod fillets with egg sauce, assorted cold cuts

### **Potatoes**

Home fried, hash-browned or cottage fried, steamed rice

### **Breads**

Toast: white, raisin, whole wheat, light rye, soft or crusty rolls, sweet rolls, Danish, muffins, doughnuts, crackers

### **Beverages**

Milk: whole, 2%, skimmed, buttermilk, chocolate drink, Instant Breakfast, Ovaltine, Coffee cream; hot milk. Black tea, green tea, coffee, decaffeinated coffee, cocoa, iced tea, water (also distilled water), Cola drinks, low calorie beverages, Club soda (or Seltzer)

### **Soups**

Consomme  
Canadian pea soup

### **Assorted hors-d'oeuvres**

Daily selections: salads (tossed salad, cole slaw, potato salad, pickled eggs, devilled eggs, pickled herring, sardines, cottage cheese, lettuce, tomato, cucumber, olives, radish, celery, onions, green pepper, carrots); cold meats (cold chicken, sliced bologna, sliced beef, sliced ham, sliced tongue) and  
Sliced lamb  
Pickle and pimento beef  
Salmon salad  
Tomato salad  
Waldorf salad

### **Entrees**

Grilled minced steak  
Fried chicken, cranberry sauce  
Baked haddock in tomato sauce  
Macaroni and cheese  
Beef chow mein, crisp noodles

### **Vegetables**

Mashed potatoes  
Parisienne potatoes  
Buttered green peas  
Kidney beans  
Kernel corn  
Noodles  
Rice

### **Desserts**

Daily desserts: fresh fruit: (British Columbia Delicious apples, Quebec MacIntosh apples, Niagara cherries, oranges, bana-

nas, grapes, fresh fruit cup); cheese: (Cheddar, processed cheese, Oka, Edam, Cheshire, Gouda); ice-cream: (assorted ice-creams and sundaes, ice-cream novelties, sherbets); various yoghurts and

Raspberry jelly  
Creamy rice and raisin pudding  
Chilled water melon  
Apple pie  
Chocolate cake, fudge icing

### **Soups**

Chicken vegetable  
Maritime clam chowder

### **Assorted hors-d'oeuvres**

Daily selections (see lunch) and  
Chopped liver  
Salami  
Shrimp  
Pickled beets  
Bean salad

### **Entrées**

Grilled steak  
Curry of chicken with garnishes  
Poached salmon fillet, parsley sauce  
Baked ham, raisin sauce  
Lamb chops, mint jelly

### **Vegetables**

French fried potatoes  
Boiled new potatoes  
Carrots julienne  
Lima beans  
Fresh spinach  
Buttered broad egg noodles  
Herbed rice

### **Desserts**

Daily desserts  
Lunch desserts and  
Raisin cake, creamy frosting  
Maple syrup pie  
Preserved pineapple  
Plum cobbler