

## Homage to the Punjab – Sandy Gage

The year was 1959, and Pathfinder canoes were winding down Maple Creek for the first time in many years. We had picked up our wannigan of food for the second part of the trip at the Brent post office, and expected to eat our way through the usual assortment of cans, packets of powder and white bread. I'm not exactly sure where the culinary inspiration hit, probably around Erables Lake, with the extra supplies purchased at McGaughey's store making the Staff think seriously about lightening the food packs.

Second Man, Mel See, ladled out the evening meal, as Campers watched from a respectable distance. "OK, guys, here's your canned hamburgers and canned peas with a nice helping of Punjab Rice."

What could this exotic concoction be, that accompanied the usual tinned fare? Mel and Headman Rick Litterick had not been grinding up spices or building a tandoori oven, as far as we knew. The taste test seemed to indicate Minute Rice with melted cheese mixed in.

Minute Rice has not changed much in the last 50 years, but the cheese is another story. In those days, longer trips were issued an oblong block of Kraft processed cheese, which was packed in a corrugated cardboard box. The cheese was an orangey-yellow material that was almost indestructible. Former Trading Post head honcho Pete Avery remembers that when this stuff sat all day in a canvas pack under the hot sun, it took on the consistency (and perhaps the taste) of plastic explosives.

On that August evening we campers decided this gooey mixture was.....pretty good.

In later years, as a Headman, I occasionally produced a pot of Punjab Rice, and maybe threw in some fried onion. I assumed the concoction had nothing to do with the cuisines of the sub-continent, but the name had a certain ring to it.

Here is an adaptable recipe that might be the 'new' Punjab Rice:

3 tetra-brick packages of Mori-No Silken (firm) tofu, drained and cut into small cubes

3 packets of Home Gourmet Indian Korma Curry [or other mild curry mix]

Minute Rice for 9 trippers

3 or 4 onions, chopped

3 handfuls of raisins (oldtimers: that's one pannikin)

a handful of nuts

2 handfuls of sun-dried tomatoes, soaked for an hour (if possible) & drained

a (freeze-dried) green vegetable, soaked and drained according to package instructions.

3 cups water

Fry up the onions in whatever oil/fat is available. When they are transparent, add the curry mix and stir-fry for a minute or two. Transfer to pot number 1, and pour in the water. Bring this mixture to a boil and reduce heat, stirring occasionally.

Get the water going for the rice in pot number 2, and follow package directions.

Throw the raisins, tomatoes and vegetable in pot 1. Cover this mixture and cook for about 5 minutes.

Throw the tofu and nuts in pot 1; stir everything gently but well. Cover and cook about 3 minutes. Serve over rice.

(Tofu is a great source of protein that tastes 'fresh'. It does have some moisture in it that is drained away, but not much. However, tofu is not a big hit with most 12-year-olds. The nuts and raisins component may have to be ramped up to gain acceptance.....)

-Sandy Gage

