



# KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly

## Fall

# Rituals

Carnival has come and gone, the high jinks of high season. This is when we all muse and some remark, "Oh, I wish it were 'Blessing of the Fleet' tomorrow," or "Wouldn't it be great if the Portuguese Festival were this weekend?" In either case, the thinking

is that we could start summer all over again.

We know we can't, so after passing through a small valley of regret we look forward to corduroy and cashmere, tie shoes and long pants. Another round of activities, the sea laven-



der in the marsh, the goldenrod in the dunes, the asters scattered by the side of the road, the sound of the cicada singing Tithonus' song. Fewer shore birds, fewer song birds and the shortening of the days move us onward, letting us adapt to rather than be jolted into the next season. We leave summer, but have a local "season within a season" which to many is when Cape Cod is at its very best. Indian Summer will ease us from summer into the winter. The beauty of Indian Summer is such that you won't think back or forward; it is that demanding in its specialness. For the last two weeks in September and the first two in October you can chew the euphoria out of the air.

Due to two bouts with the east wind holding the wet weather in, we have had a head start in the mushroom activity of autumn this year. There are summer mushrooms - Puffballs and Agaricus - that are readily seen and gathered. But dark into the

woods, the *Russula Cyamoxatha* can push through the earth before anyone has passed by. Not that it dissolves more quickly than other mushrooms, but its haunts are more secretive and farther away, in shaded light. It's much more of a "hunt" mushroom than a "field" mushroom. They do reappear in the same areas each year, that cuts the chase, but they require a lot of rain. Since we did have two rain periods in August, I went a'hunting and a'haunting and there were more *Cyamoxantha* than I had seen in 12 or more years. The shadings of blues, greens to blending violets causes you to gaze at and enjoy the appearance of the mushrooms. The specific light of the day makes all the difference. With apologies you cut the stem, collect the beauty and plan a menu. This excites you into thinking about fall mushrooming and you're more willing to let summer go, despite all its brightness and languor.

Autumn is very much an outdoor season. Summer activities are not completely abandoned. You can swim in October, but only at noon and with a towel and sweatshirt nearby and, of course, tennis is even more comfortable. But cranberrying is prime time and steals the attention on warm, dry days. Some bogs may be ready by late September, mid-October is peak and some may last beyond the first frost. The bogs are dotted throughout Provincetown. An aerial view would allow you to mark the spots. You could locate the larger bogs this way using landmarks, but there are many half hidden bogs. The berries are cyclical like most of nature but you can always find a productive bog if the rain has been right through the season. Most of these bogs were family owned and tended. they produced

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berries every year. But now they have gone wild and are at the whim of climate and soil conditions. It's a glorious feeling to be scooping in a bountiful bog. With a bit of lunch and cranberry wine you can relax and let nature come to you.



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Brown thrashers, usually shy, will appear. Deer and fox can pass by, hawks overhead. All is peaceful as the diurnal hunters make their way through their territories. The cranberries are such a gift, unsprayed, so delicious and useful. They will last through the winter, a cool spot with circulating air or refrigeration will keep them. It will make all the difference at Thanksgiving.

Going towards the sea, a clamming license is part of the fall ritual. Sea clams were the bounty of summer. It won't be until next spring that you can walk out onto the flats for those buxom bivalves. It's steamers and quahogs in 3 sizes that are the bounty from October to April. Town Hall is where you get your license and the newspaper will announce which flats are open.

We used to fish daily at the wharf from late September to early October until Christmas for tinker mackerel and snapper blues. You would "jig" for them and dill a bucket as fast as you could move, unless the wind were east. You could plan on it, tide coming, tide going, the whole town feasted on "little oils." They were eaten fresh and pickled or marinated and so lasted the year. You did that fast, before the end of the run. One day around Christmas a storm, a nor'easter would come up and SLAP! like an emperors clap, no more tinkers or blues for another year. At the same time, eels dig into the mud, uncatchable for half a year. The bass migration at the very end of September and the first week in October still fills our plates.

The beach plums, chokeberries and elder berries are all being dealt with at the same time. Pies, jellies, wine, cordials are all being prepared for holidays and winter itself. The lengthening evenings are filled with activity corresponding to the season. Each day has a homey satisfaction to it. Use of time, use of the bounty of the land and the sea rounds out the beautiful season of autumn. Winter will follow with reflection and visiting, a respite in some ways but also with its unique activities.

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