

## When is a *tourtière* not a *tourtière*?

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As I was growing up, a *tourtière* was a round pie filled with ground pork, onions, and spices. It was served hot, especially at Christmas and during the winter holidays, but also baked other times of the year. Not until I began to see *tourtières* listed in inventories after death in the notarial records of New France did I realize that the *tourtière* was actually—and originally—the pan used to bake *tourtes*.

The *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 1st Edition (1694), defines *tourtière* as:

Kitchen utensil which is used to cook "tourtes." Sometimes made of silver or copper.  
*tourtière*. s. f. *Ustensile de cuisine, qui sert à faire cuire des tourtes. Tourtière d'argent. tourtière de cuivre.*

And what was a *tourte*? A kind of baked pastry. Pigeon is said to be the content of one and jam of another in this definition.

*Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 1st Edition (1694)

TOURTE. s. f. *Especie de patisserie, de piece de four.*

A later old French dictionary adds: Pastry in which is placed meats, fish, *etc.*, and which is served hot.  
*Pièce de pâtisserie, dans laquelle on met des viandes, du poisson, etc. et qu'on sert chaude.*<sup>1</sup>

So a *tourtière* was a pan to bake "tarts" (*tourtes*) or pastries, of various kinds. Among the inventories I have seen, I can cite the "Tourtière de cuivre," copper pan, estimated at a value of 10 *livres*, the second most expensive in the list of utensils used for cooking, in the 21 June 1700 inventory of deceased Marguerite Anthiaume, wife, first, of André Jarret, *sieur* de Beauregard, and, second, Pierre Fontaine *dit* Bienvenu. This part of the inventory was taken in her house on Isle-Ste-Marie, an island in the St-Laurent near Varennes and Verchères. She also had property in Verchères inherited from her husband's estate and in Montréal that she had purchased. (Notary Raimbault, photocopy from the archives)

Marguerite Anthiaume died 4 October 1699 at Ile-Ste-Marie, one of the islands granted to her husband André, days after the birth of Pierre Fontaine's fourth child, Jacques, born 24 September, baptised 5 October 1699, Varennes. Marguerite was buried on the same day, also at Varennes. Jacques does not appear to have survived. See PRDH Family # 6907 for the Fontaine children and #91895 for Marguerite's death on 4 October, burial 5 October 1699. Although her burial record is silent on the place of death, the inventory after death states she died on Isle-Ste-Marie.

There are so many variations for recipes of modern *tourtières*. My mother refused to add potatoes, saying we were not so poor that we had to add anything to the recipe that she had learned from her family. In fact, I did not taste a *tourtière* with potatoes until quite recently. Her mother was a Jarret de Beauregard. And, it is not likely that the New France *tourtes* had potatoes also cooked in their *tourtières*. From Wikipedia in French, my translation:

"In New France, growing and consuming "la pomme de terre" [potato or potato], introduced in 1762 by Henri Louis Duhamel du Monceau (122), was not developed with success until 1764 by the first civil

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<sup>1</sup> See definitions at *Dictionnaires d'autrefois*: French dictionaries of the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, the ARTFL Project: <http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/node/17>

governor of Quebec James Murray, an agriculturist by training. (123) Before this, the originally-French colonists did not grow it, considering it unsuitable for consumption. During the Seven Years' War, the intendant François Bigot tried in vain to introduce its cultivation (124): the colonists did not find it good to feed anything but pigs. (125). From the beginning of the 19th century, cultivation of potatoes spread throughout Quebec with the massive arrival of Irish immigrants, chased from their country by the Great Famine suffered there between 1845 and 1851.”

{I add, it was a famine caused by the failure of the potato crops!}

Original French text:

“En Nouvelle-France, la culture et la consommation de la pomme de terre, introduite en 1762 par Henri Louis Duhamel du Monceau (122), ne furent développées avec succès qu'en 1764 par le premier gouverneur civil du Québec James Murray , agronome de formation (123). Précédemment les colons néo-français ne la cultivaient pas, la considérant impropre à la consommation. Dans la période de la Guerre de Sept Ans l'Intendant François Bigot tentera d'en développer la culture en vain (124): les colons ne la trouvant bonne qu'à nourrir les cochons (125). À partir du milieu du XIXe siècle, elle se répand largement à travers le Québec avec l'arrivée massive des émigrants irlandais, chassés de leur pays par la Grande famine qui y sévit entre 1845 et 1851.”

[http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Histoire\\_de\\_la\\_pomme\\_de\\_terre#Canada](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Histoire_de_la_pomme_de_terre#Canada)

122.↑ Henri-Louis Duhamel Du Monceau, *Traité de la culture des terres*, Tome sixième, chez Hippolyte-Louis Guérin, 1761 (lire en ligne [archive]), p. 168–

123.↑ G. P. Browne, James Murray, *Dictionnaire biographique du Canada*, vol. 4, 1980 (lire en ligne [archive])

124.↑ François Rousseau, *L'œuvre de chère en Nouvelle-France: le régime des malades à l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec*, 1983 (ISBN 978-2-7637-7006-2, lire en ligne [archive]), p. 169–125.↑ Fernand Ouellet, *Histoire économique et sociale du Québec, 1760-1850. Structures et conjonctures*, Fides, p. 251