



## Laskiainen

*By Carol Melancon, photographs by Erick Leskinen.*

Every year, on Shrove Tuesday, the day before the beginning of Lent, students throughout Finland are given the day off from school to go sledding. Afterward, they return home for an evening meal of *hernekeitto*—or pea soup—and *laskiaispulla*, a Lenten bun filled with whipped cream and jam or marzipan. Shrove Tuesday, is better known as Mardi Gras in the United States, but in Finland, it is known as *Laskiainen*, or Sledding Day. The word “Laskiainen” means “descending to fasting” or “settling down.” Through the centuries, Laskiainen has evolved from being a religious event into its current version as a winter festival.

Laskiainen is believed to predate Christianity as a celebration of longer days. It wasn't until after the introduction of Christianity between 1050 and 1300 that it marked the beginning of Lent. Sometime after the Protestant Reformation started in 1517, Laskiainen became less a religious event and more a peasant celebration of women's work. (Men's work was celebrated at Christmas.)

At one time, flax was an important crop in Finland. It was spun into thread during the shorter days of winter and then woven into linen when the days grew longer. On Laskiainen, villagers celebrated the longer days by going sledding from midnight until daylight. Well wishes such as *pitkiä pellav*—tall flax plants!—were shouted at sledders as they slid downhill. It was believed that the farther one slid, the taller and bigger the flax plants would grow. Women wore light-colored clothing and combed their hair often, in an attempt to ensure whiter and longer linen. All but essential work was restricted. Fatty foods such as pea soup, blood sausages, and bread baked with fat, and pancakes made with lard were served throughout the day. Leaving food on the table all day guaranteed fatter pigs and cows that

would produce more milk throughout the year. Sauna was taken in silence, which was thought to reduce the number of mosquitoes in the coming summer.



*Young ladies brave the polar dip, Winterfest '08.*

Winterfest is Finn Camp's version of Laskiainen. Each year, on the first Saturday in February, members and their friends gather at Sun Lake to roast *makkara*, drink hot chocolate, ice skate, fish, and, of course, to cheer the “polar bears” as they plunge into ice-cold water. “Polar bears” is the name given to anyone brave enough to run from sauna and jump into the lake through a hole cut in the ice. In the evening, the festivities move indoors to the Clubroom for the annual chili cook-off, raffles, and dancing.



*Ice fishing on Sun Lake, Winterfest '08.*

*See next page for details about Winterfest '09.*



**Glitter & Games Night** was a rousing success. Many people played Euchre & Dice, and Dominoes ruled the evening. Others chose not to play in the games but surely participated in the "Glitter" part of the night by purchasing raffle tickets and going for the "gold" (or silver), as the case may be. Sisu to all who made the journey in the terrible weather and donated the awesome buffet. Many thanks to Liz, Joni, Bev and Elegantly Fresh Jewelry for the donations to the silent auction part of the raffle. So much fun was had that people are already asking when the next games night will be.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

February 5, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

### **Future Planning Committee Meeting**

The Future Planning Committee is seeking additional members. We meet the first Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the boardroom. The Future Planning Committee's purpose (per Blue Book section 204.2.5.1) is "to review and analyze the facilities and operations of the Association, and make recommendations to the membership. Analyze projects for improvements proposed by the membership or Board of Directors. On projects involving finances, gather information regarding costs and time to implement." Being a committee member also results in eight hours of work hours. Hope to see you next month!

February 7, 2009, 1:00 p.m. Sun Lake

### **Annual Winterfest and Chili Cook-off**

The fun starts at Sun Lake when sauna opens at 1:00 p.m. In addition to the traditional events, there will be a live reindeer 2 to 4 p.m. at Sun Lake for petting and viewing. The Clubroom opens at 3:00 p.m. and the Chili Cook-off begins at 6:00 p.m., followed by a dance. We are looking for members interested in earning work hours. Also, anyone interested in donating a raffle prize should, please contact Tammie King

at 248-624-6691 or email her at [tammie@tammieking.com](mailto:tammie@tammieking.com).

February 7, 2009, 6:30 p.m.

### **Bar Committee Meeting**

February 15, 2009 10 a.m., Boardroom.

### **Board Meeting**

For board members only; visitors are welcome at noon.

March 14, 2009, 8 p.m., Clubroom.

### **Saint Urho's Day**

Come help us celebrate St. Urho's chasing the grasshoppers out of Finland. There will be live music, food, games and the crowning of a new 2009 king and queen. Come join the fun and show your support to your association! The cost at the door will be \$5. Don't forget to wear your purple and green!

June 14, 2009

### **Annual Fishing Derby**

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources free fishing weekend is June 13-14. Therefore, mark your calendar for Sunday, June 14, for the Annual Fishing Derby at Sun Lake.

## NEWSLETTER ITEMS

Finn Camp members are welcome to submit items of news to be published in the newsletter. Calendar items should include a brief description and contact information about an upcoming event or meeting.

Items for the next newsletter are due by:

**February 20, 2009**, but the sooner the better.

Email to: [newsletter\\_editor@finncamp.org](mailto:newsletter_editor@finncamp.org)

Or mail to:

Newsletter Editor

c/o DFCSA

2524 Loon Lake Rd.

Wixom MI 48393-1654

Or place items in the Clubroom's mailbox.



# FINN CAMP

DETROIT FINNISH COOPERATIVE SUMMER CAMP ASSOCIATION FEBRUARY 2009

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# NEWSLETTER

FOR SALE

## 2009 Finn Camp Calendar

These calendars are available to order for \$12.00 each. Shipping and handling is \$2.50 extra.

Please send a check to:  
DFCSCA Sisterhood  
c/o Tammie King  
1826 Bruce St.  
Wixom, MI 48393

Anyone who would like to reserve a calendar for Winterfest weekend pickup, please call Tammie King, 248-624-6691, in advance; we will have only a dozen to sell.

## Camp #50

On the west side adjacent to the bathhouse with a view of Loon Lake. Knotty pine paneling on the walls with tongue-and-groove flooring. With a new roof, vinyl siding, two new vinyl windows, a twin-sized bunk bed and one double bed. Call 989-736-6583 or 989-464-1918.



DETROIT FINNISH COOPERATIVE SUMMER CAMP ASSOCIATION  
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