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MRS. BUTTERNUT

Ernestine Butternut was born in 1901 in North Hatley, a small English Eastern Townships community. She raised her children to be creative and persevere. "Always pursue your dreams," she drilled into them. Once her children were grown, she realized that she had given them her all – and ignored herself. She hadn't followed her own advice.

She decided to begin baking with squash and pumpkin. With her delicious generously-filled pies and her muffins and cakes, she soon became known as the village cake lady. Savouring this first taste of local fame, she discovered a hunger she didn't know she had. She took pleasure in both managing her business and tasting her rich creations and inevitably gained weight. Was it a secret desire to be noticed? Giving in to her long repressed urge to introduce her deserts to the world, she decided to begin with Ireland, a country that had always fascinated her and where she believed she had distant relatives.

So in 1954, Ernestine took her courage in both hands and crossed the ocean looking for a business partner. She was granted a meeting with Sir Hugh Beaver, owner of the Guinness brewery, and eagerly confided her project to him. Now, Sir Hugh had other projects in mind – he was about to publish the very first edition of the Guinness Book of World Records. But Mrs. Butternut did not return home empty handed, because the meeting had given her an idea.

Upon her return, she quickly organized the first-ever pumpkin growing competition. Though she was pleased to win prize after prize, she did not have a clear conscience. Her squashes had become so huge and the flesh – her primary ingredient – so abundant that she... she... was throwing it out. One day, in an attempt to lighten her conscience, she tried making a soap with some excess pumpkin.

To her great surprise, when she began selling the soap, it was a huge success, becoming even more popular than her most popular desserts. People said it was rich and softened and hydrated skin... It brought her fame not only in the village but all across Québec... and in Ireland.

The legend has it that on that day, Mrs. Butternut's weight returned to normal.