Doughnuts and the Salvation Army

Recently I was shown a small pamphlet entitled *It's the Dough That Makes the Doughnut NOT THE HOLE*. On the cover is a picture of a World War I soldier in full gear and holding a bitten circle of dough. Surely doughnuts and coffee and soldiers and trains and social centers and girls and motherly women and the Salvation Army all have long association together, when we think of wartime. Apparently the doughnuts from that war inspired such memories that there were "many requests for the recipe," hence the pamphlet. There is no date on the publication but it came perhaps long enough after the armistice for a little nostalgia to have developed.

The quoted rule is general because "these ingredients were not always available" and so the doughnuts could not be made consistently the same. Were they made in France, in the countryside, in field kitchens, in bombed and abandoned hotels? Did the S.A. accompany the war or were the doughnuts strictly a stateside treat? However they were provided, the soldiers "declared repeatedly that the Sallies put a little religion and love in each batch of doughnuts."

Comparing the recipe with a rule from the *Joy of Cooking*, one finds a curious similarity—except in the amount of flour, which the Salvation Army gives with a fine trust in the judgment of the cook, being four cups in Mrs. Rombauer's book and one cup to be augmented by "enough flour to make a dough that can be rolled and handled" in the pamphlet.

My informant had found this recipe in the papers of a deceased relative who would have been a child at the time of the war. It says a lot about the emotional messages of some foods that it was saved and passed on.

Salvation Army Doughnut Recipe

One cup of sugar beaten with 3 eggs, add cup of milk, 2 tablespoonsfuls of melted butter and ½ teaspoonful of lemon extract. Put a cup of flour in the sifter and add 3 heaping teaspoonsfuls of baking powder, 1 teaspoonful of salt and ¼ teaspoonful of finely grated nutmeg. Sift into liquids and beat well together, adding enough flour to make a dough that can be rolled and handled, but not too stiff. Cut and fry in leaf lard, keeping the fat at almost boiling point. Cover with powdered sugar.

AW
Apple Boiling in the Shenandoah Valley

Apple butter-making is a fall activity in the Valley of Virginia, but the opportunity to write about it came in May, when I visited my brother, who lives near Harrisonburg. He knows this tradition through the small Mount Horeb Presbyterian Church near Grottoes, where he was finishing a term as interim minister. Last October he and some of his family had helped make the 500-some quarts the church community produces every year and I received enthusiastic descriptions of the process and photos of all of them taking a turn with the stirring paddles. They knew I would be hooked.

So on a perfectly blue and gracious day we drove out to see Eva Ann Wonderley, walked in the kitchen door without knocking, as the preacher is allowed to do, and were soon sitting on a pillared front porch, he on one side to talk with her husband Andy, I on a swing to quiz Eva Ann (pronounced with a short e) about her unusual specialty.

Her mother made apple butter, she said, at the Augusta Military Academy where she worked and she always brought some home to the family, while the boys soon polished off the school’s supply, which was stored in crocks covered with brown paper. Spoilage was not a problem because the cadets ate it up so fast.

But it was from the Wonderley family tradition that Eva Ann has developed her present skills. Her husband’s family always made it at home and she still uses the same kind of copper kettles. The kettles are valuable and are kept hidden in the basement so they won’t be stolen. They are not, though, irreplaceable. The Farm Bureau sells new ones and kettles sometimes turn up at auctions.

Every year she makes two batches: one of three kettles (of 40 gallons each) at home for her family’s use; one of five kettles for Mount Horeb. At both times helpers come and a party atmosphere develops.

The process is always the same: Jars—About a week ahead, several women get together and wash all the jars that have been collected over the past year. Quarts are preferred because they make fewer jars to fill. They are cleaned in hot soapy water with bleach added and then dried upside down on brown paper. The jars must be completely dry, to prevent spoilage but they needn’t be sterilized beyond what I have described. Everyone contributes jars. The rings are saved but lids are bought new.

Preparing the apples—Soon after lunch on the day before the boiling, they begin to peel and snit Stayman apples. “Snit?” “Yes, we snit ’em, cut ’em into wedges, quarters or so.” “German word?” “I guess. We just always say that.” Both Eva Ann’s family and the Wonderleys come from German stock. This is a new word in my vocabulary. Hand-operated machines do the peeling, but the cores and stems must be removed by hand—the snitting. Each kettle will hold ten bushels of apples, which is nineteen milk buckets of snits. Stayman apples are preferred, but though they are now becoming hard to find, local apples bought ungraded in seventeen-bushel lots are cheapest and can usually be obtained. After a potluck supper, that day is finished. (I have to say here that I would work hard for a chance at that supper. I attended an afternoon concert at the church and was treated afterward to refreshments that a city church would be hard pressed to provide.)

Cooking—Work starts before daybreak with the building of a wood fire under each pot. Usually the tripods are...
set right on the ground or on a graved space, sometimes a single pot is under a shed. If there is rain, tents are put up and everyone chokes on the smoke.

The snits are washed and put wet, a few buckets at a time, into the hot kettles. No water is added because that would mean extended cooking time to boil it away. The snits sort of melt and more and more are added. Seven copper pennies, well-washed with salt and vinegar, go into each kettle to keep the apples from sticking, and seven pennies are retrieved from each batch as the ladling out proceeds—if they can find them all. A penny left in is just a bonus for somebody. Stirring is done with wooden paddles constructed of five-foot poles with a bolted-on downward-angled piece to reach the bottom of the kettle. There is a rhyme that describes the motion:

Twice around the edge and once through the middle—
That’s the way you stir the apple butter kettle.

I’ve seen the pictures and it can’t be easy. Eva Ann is proud of one of her daughters who figured out a way to support the long part with a suspended rope, making it easier to handle.

Somewhere in here breakfast is served, usually managed by one of Eva Ann’s daughters. For the church boiling there will be twenty-five or thirty people, down some from the numbers that help with the snitting.

Not until the apples are thick enough that a spoonful will hold to a plate turned upside down will sugar and spices be added. It is important not to undercook. The amount of sugar will, of course, depend on the tartness or sweetness of the apples. In any case, there is a lot of it because sugar preserves the mixture. Eva Ann uses from fifty to eighty-five pounds of sugar per kettle, judging strictly by taste. The sugar must be stirred in a little at a time and after it is all well-mixed and the taste right, the apples are brought to the boil again and they are cooked for one more hour. Then oil of cinnamon and oil of cloves are added, in a ratio of two to one, again the amounts judged by taste. Lunch is set out during the cooking and if the process goes on long enough, sometimes there is supper too.

But usually by three or four o’clock the boiling is finished and the jars are
filled, wiped, and sealed with lids kept hot in steaming electric skillets. Then the tired crew can listen to the pongs and pings of cooling jar lids as they seal. All five hundred jars of the church batch will be spoken for ahead of time at $3.75 a quart and $2.00 a pint. When Eva Ann makes apple butter at home, she charges only the cost of ingredients for the people who help. Even these remarkably low prices are threatened by the increasing cost of apples and especially of the spice oils.

As for the finished product, it is not like any apple butter I have ever tasted, no trace of graininess but thick, a few solid bits left, the flavors balanced and not excessively sweet. Everyone seems to eat it with cottage cheese. Eva Ann likes it best with hot bread.

The apple boiling is a fun time, she says. I plan to invent a reason to make the trip again, come fall. I would be just as awkward with a five-foot paddle as anyone else but I think I know how to cook breakfast.

AW

This is the last issue of the newsletter for which I serve as editor. It is a job I have enjoyed and I hope to contribute articles in the future. But my husband is retiring and we will move to a warmer climate for the winters, and so I will not be on hand in Ann Arbor with enough consistency to be able to continue. I must express my thanks to—and awed admiration of—Rhonda DeMason. Without her help and expertise I absolutely could not have attempted to put out a newsletter. I signed on only when she said that she was ready to take the raw material and process it. Her skill, her taste and her pleasant nature have made our partnership comfortable and enriching.

As for being a culinary historian, well I am still working on it. Having accepted the tag when I joined, I found that I paid attention to oddities and traditions in a new way. And then there is all that I have learned from association with members and from our programs. Though I feel that the term “historian” too much dignifies what I know and what I might do in the way of investigating the evolution of food customs, this is an interest that will continue to thrive wherever I am. Don’t forget me, even if I can’t make the meetings! I am out there somewhere learning which kinds of peppers we can digest and whether the javelina is good to eat and wanting to give it a try if they don’t stay out of my herb garden.

Ann Woodward
TRANSITIONS .......... This issue of the newsletter is editor Ann Woodward’s thirteenth, and, I am very sad to report, her last. For the past four years Ann has willingly given most generously of her time and talents in producing this newsletter in a very professional and timely manner, and the articles that she has contributed herself have always been most interesting. It has been a happy association for all of us who have worked with her. We extend our most grateful thanks and wish her and Jack good times in the house they have bought for the winter months in Bisbee, Arizona. While still maintaining a base in Ann Arbor, they will mostly divide their time between Bisbee and their summer home in Charlevoix, so we bid them au revoir and hope to welcome them back as often as time allows.

It was going to be a difficult task to find someone to fill Ann’s shoes, I surmised. However, after only one announcement at a fall meeting, it was not too long before Randy Schwartz stepped up to the plate to offer his services. He had consulted with Ann and found that it would not be too onerous a task! Randy has been a member of CHAA since 1992, conscientiously keeping all his copies of the newsletter since then. He is in his fourteenth year as a professor of mathematics at Schoolcraft College in Livonia, where he just ended a term as chair of the department, and is the editor of the departmental newsletter The Right Angle. He loves to write and has published many articles and poems over the years and is in his second year of studying Arabic. Indian, Mediterranean, and Arabic foods are ones in which he is particularly interested.

Let us welcome and thank him for being willing to take on this task, offer him support, and keep him supplied with articles, ideas, and feedback so that we may continue the tradition of a great newsletter. J.L.

Longtime member of our group and even longer on the Ann Arbor gastronomic scene, Ricky Agranoff is the co-author of Ann Arbor Fresh! with Lois Kane. Published this fall, it is a cookbook that delves into the history and lore of the Ann Arbor Farmers’ Market and the fine food stores in the surrounding historic Kerrytown area. Over thirty profiles of local growers and food artisans make for good reading plus some recipes from the growers themselves, more recipes from Ricky’s kitchen and information on basic techniques thrown in for good measure.

Ricky, a Certified Culinary Professional and member of the International Association of Culinary Professionals is the author of two other cookbooks: Cooking in Porcelain and Risotto, Paellas and Other Rice Dishes. She was a co-founder of the Moveable Feast Restaurant.
February 21 - All About Great Cheeses  
Speaker: Ari Weinzeig, Zingerman’s Delicatessen

March 21 - *Dr. Chase’s Receipt Book*  
A Household Guide from the mid 1800’s  
Speaker: Russell Bidlack, Professor Emeritus, School of Library Science, UM

April 18 - Salt, Smoke and History  
Speaker: T.R. Durham, Durham’s Tracklements

May 16 - Changes in Fish Consumption in the U.S. and Monahan’s Market over the Past 20 Years  
Speaker: Mike Monahan, Monahan’s Seafood Market

CHAA Newsletter  
2222 Fuller Court #1101A  
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor  
Volume XIV Number 3, Fall 1998

*First Class*