

TOASTY NEW HOME FOR BAKERY

By Anne Schmidt

Nan Martin is back in business, on the go. Nan manages the Community Mercantile's Verbena Bakery, across the alley from the food store. Together with an assistant, Larry Bethel, the bakery produces whole grain breads and baked goodies for sale through the food co-op. This interview explores her business, her new location, and also reveals information for those who would like to use more wholesome and natural products in their own baking.

"Originally this bakery building was a two-car garage, then a bait shop, and now after a few alterations, it has become Verbena Bakery."

- How does the space you now have compare to what you had at the old store?

"Not any comparison at all, really. The old space was adequate...barely. The freedom of having my own space appeals to me, and it's at least twice as large."

- What kind of equipment do you have? What are the new additions?

"My equipment is very basic: ovens, dough mixers, work tables, proof box, cooling racks. No automated dough dividers, loaf shapers, conveyor belts. I believe in the quality of hand-made products. My only new piece of equipment is "Baby Verbena" which is a smaller version of my big dough mixer. I bought her so I could get into business while waiting on electricity-related problems to subside. Now, she will be mixing only cookies and light dough items."

- What were some of the problems you had getting in full production; problems with mixer hook-ups?

"My "Big Verbena" is now hooked up. At last. Problems I had were with KPL. In the beginning they told me that three-phase (the type of current BV runs on) electricity was going to be too much of an expense for them; that the amount of electricity I consumed was not worth the expense to them. Well, this threw me into a tizzy because that meant selling BV and getting a newer machine that would run on single phase power. (Eds. note: single phase power would also consume more energy to do the same job.) I looked at a mixer with an \$1850 price tag...about the only thing available at the time. I also tried to sell my



Photos by Kathy Clark



mixer. With no one interested in buying it, that would have been another \$650 expense for me to absorb. After singing my sad song long enough, someone mentioned that I should call the Kansas Corporation Commission and explain my plight. In a few days, KPL was out to give me a new estimate on what my monthly minimum bill would be to have for them to provide service. When they told me \$12.95, I said I'd take it! Now it's full speed ahead.

- What items do you make?

"My products are natural, whole grain baked goods: breads, buns, bagels, cinnamon rolls, cookies, brownies, date bars, cakes, granola, all sold through the Community Mercantile. How much we make each day all hinges on demand, of course. I do want the bakery to remain a small, personal, quality-oriented endeavor."

- Do you have any tips for converting white flour recipes to whole wheat food?

"Unlike white, all-purpose

flour, whole wheat flour takes two forms. One is hard wheat flour - for use in bread. The other is soft wheat flour for use in everything else. Hard wheat flour is high in gluten and protein. Soft wheat flour has less of both. When I first started using whole grain flours, I eased into it. Using $\frac{1}{2}$ whole wheat. Gradually, I used more and more until now it's 100% whole wheat or whole grain. (Except for one variety, Jane's Plain.) Cookbooks suggest substituting $\frac{7}{8}$ cup whole wheat flour for 1 cup white flour and decrease the amount of oil used 20% since there is oil in the germ of the whole wheat flour."

- And how do you go about converting recipes that call for sugar to honey?

"It really is experimental. With cookies I probably use an equal substitution and just add more dry ingredients. More often than not, I also exclude eggs and baking powder in cookies. The protein that eggs add are substituted with complementary soy flour and seeds and various other whole grain flours. By guess and by gosh is much the attitude I have acquired over the years and it usually works for me. When using honey, it's a good idea to use a bit lower cooking temperature, since honey tends to scorch above 325-350°. Honey is not the only sweetener I use. I'm totally sold on malt syrup. It's great in cookies, and in combination with honey in cinnamon rolls it's deluxe! Sorghum is an excellent sweetener, especially good in apple pie. Blackstrap molasses I consider more of a flavor than a sweetening agent. It's real good in bread.

EATING - WILD STYLE

By Danny Bentley

Even at this time of year there are still wild edible plants to be picked and dug (if the ground's not too hard.) I have to write this quite a bit ahead of time so who knows what the weather will be in late November or early December after this temperate autumn.

If you can locate the dry stalks of Jerusalem Artichokes (members of the sunflower family), you can bet that there will be plenty of the inulin-rich tuber roots underground. Dig these tubers, wash them and cook like potatoes or slice raw into salads. The wild ones have a much richer taste than the store-

bought kind. Don't try to store a large amount of these as they shrivel. If you do, keep them in a box of sand. Or you can leave them in the ground until you're ready to use them.

Cat Tail and Arrowhead are both aquatic plants. Their tubers can be dug or mooshed out, as the case may be and used like potatoes. They may also be dried and ground and used as a flour extender. You should gather aquatic plants from places you are confident that the water is not polluted.

In the winter it's harder to get the vitamin C you so badly need because there is less fresh stuff. Vitamin C abounds in the red velvet-like seed heads of Sumac. These heads supplied what is said to be a favorite winter drink of many Native Americans. Don't worry - poison sumac has very white berries and the red sumac is not poison. To prepare

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