



TRASH TALK
GRETCHEN STADLER

Getting creative in a difficult period

While all of us are challenged by stay-at-home orders due to COVID-19, many folks are diving in wholeheartedly and finding creative activities to keep themselves busy, help out our community and continue their dedication to waste reduction.

Teresa Walker has sewn over 100 masks (and counting!) for local individuals. Friends from as far as Pennsylvania and Texas have raided their sewing supplies and donated fabric, elastic and sewing machine needles so she could offer her homemade masks for free. Her priority now is to send masks to the Navajo Nation at Four Corners where medical supplies are scarce and elders are especially at risk. Ann Mehaffy's sewing machine has also been whirring away: "These days it feels like a cross between homesteading and helping the war effort," she said.

Other folks are busy starting victory gardens. Growing your own vegetables reduces a lot of waste and increases your self-sufficiency. Since night temperatures still can fall below freezing, many are planting seeds and tending their starts in the kitchen.

See **Creative** / Page 2B



BETWEEN THE ROWS
WENDY SCHMIDT

Willows and water features

Nothing is more peaceful and soothing in the landscape than a water feature with a pond, a small waterfall and some riffles and a weeping willow tree. It brings back the iconic scene on the blue willow dinnerware, but without the sad love story gone wrong.

Willows aren't the nice trees they look to be. Their wood is weak, they steal water from all other plants in the area, and as a yard tree they are not well-behaved. They shed leaves summer and fall almost into January, and their long, narrow leaves are hard to rake.

However, there are times and places that a weeping willow makes a beautiful specimen tree.

Conservation folks use other varieties of willows to hold the banks of streams against erosion.

Because of the salicylic acid contained in the willow, a sprig of it is often used in floral bouquets to make them last longer.

My dad used to slide the bark off of fresh willow branches and make each of us a whistle. As much as I tried to copy what he did, I never got a whistle that worked.

Garden chores

- Trellis peas and stake or cage your tomatoes
- Pile mulch over the root zone of your potatoes
- As the soil warms, begin to apply mulch to perennial beds and tomatoes
- Topdress roses with composted manure
- Deadhead bulbs and spring-flowering perennials as blossoms fade
- Thin seedlings to proper spacing before plants crowd each other
- Mid- to late May is the latest date to start pumpkins in time for Halloween.

No Yeast In The Store? No Problem



Dreamstime/TNS

Once it has hit its bread-making stride, sourdough starter can be stored in the refrigerator, untouched, for a few months.

SWEET SOURDOUGH

By **Rick Nelson**
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

Would-be bread bakers, you're not mistaken. The spike in demand for flour and yeast that you're witnessing in supermarkets is real.

"At the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, people worried about staying at home, and so they stocked up, a lot," said Mike Oase, chief operating officer of Kowalski's Markets, which has 11 Twin Cities locations. "People bought everything in sight. It was bigger than a Christmas week."

Oase said that flour supply lines are returning to normal. "And yeast will be back in stock in the next few weeks," he said.

The phenomenon of empty baking-aisle shelves did not go unnoticed at America's Test Kitchen, the Boston-based publisher of *Cook's Illustrated* and *Cook's Country* magazines.

The difficulty of finding yeast at the supermarket came up during an online staff meeting. That's when senior editor Andrew Janjigian — known to his fellow staffers as "the Bread Guy" and/or "the Bread Whisperer" — offered a solution.

"It's the perfect opportunity to start a sourdough starter," he said.

He'd tackled the subject in *Cook's Illus-*

trated about four years ago, but that formula called for two pounds of flour.

"Given how little flour there is out there right now, I decided to try it on a much smaller scale, and see how it works," it said.

Turns out, it works just fine. Janjigian began to document the process on his Instagram account (@wordloaf), and the experiment — which he dubbed #quarantiny-starter — went viral. "Or, as I like to say, fungal?" he said with a laugh, mentioning that yeast is a fungus.

To date, he's playing a kind of sourdough Pied Piper to about 600 fellow bakers, following along from as far away as Australia and Malaysia. "The list of names that people are calling their starters is really good," he said with a laugh. They include Clint Yeastwood, Courtney Loave, Carrie Breadshaw, Bread Astaire, Holly Doughlightly and Quentin Quarantino, and no, Janjigian hasn't christened his.

Because Janjigian has so many bakers following along in real time, he has fielded a lot of questions. Here he is on ...

• **Flour:** "Ideally, you want to start with a mix of white with whole wheat or rye, because that extra nutrition will make things happen faster," he said. "But I've done it using

only all-purpose. It has to be wheat flour and unbleached. The organisms that you get in sourdough don't come from the air or from your hands. It's from the flour itself. Ideally, it would be organic flour so that there are no fungicides, and you'd be using filtered or bottled water for that same reason.

But this experiment is showing that it can work without ideal conditions." Note: Once you've hit the twice-a-day refreshing period, switch to using white flour only. The starter no longer requires the nutrients in whole grain flours.

• **Temperature:** "The ideal temperature for sourdough is 78 degrees; that's when both bacteria and yeast are happiest," he said. "Too much higher, and it will kill all that, and too much lower and it slows everything down." If it's too cool, he suggests placing the container in an insulated cooler or freezer bag, or an unheated oven ("Don't forget it's in there, and turn on the oven," he said), or near a light bulb or a working appliance. "Something to keep the chill away," he said. "The only way to screw it up is to get it so warm as to encourage mold. That's about 90 degrees or higher."

See **Sourdough** / Page 3B

DALGONA COFFEE

Quarantine fad drives instant coffee sales

By **Anuradha Raghu**
Bloomberg News

A popular quarantine fad to whip up a foamy beverage at home is helping drive sales of instant coffee.

The Dalgona coffee sensation has flooded social media as people forced into isolation attempt to make the creamy and energizing concoction. The recipe is simple: Whisk equal parts of instant coffee, sugar and hot water until they turn into a frothy whip, then spoon over iced milk. Google Trends show searches for Dalgona coffee accelerated sharply from early March onward.

Initial data point to a "massive rise" in demand for instant coffee, far higher than before the pandemic, said Jonny Forsyth, associate director for food and drink at market research company Mintel. Consumers in lockdown began stockpiling instant coffee to give them energy and psychological comfort, while the product's affordability makes it recession-resistant, he said.

Nestle SA, the world's largest food and beverage company, says sales of instant coffee increased in most markets as closures of restaurants and cafes boost home consumption and consumers are "rediscovering" the instant variety. The company, which recently launched a Starbucks premium instant coffee range, also produces the popular brand Nescafe, which, it says, makes up one out of every seven cups of



Dreamstime/TNS

The Dalgona coffee sensation has flooded social media as people forced into isolation attempt to make the creamy and energizing concoction.

coffee drunk in the world.

Home Recipes

"Consumers are spending more time at home and trying new recipes, reproducing

for themselves the experience they enjoy in restaurants and cafes," said Philipp Navratil, Global Head of Beverage Strategic Business Units at Nestle. "Dalgona coffee is just one example of the global trends we see in the coffee category."

That's as instant coffee is adapted for making recipes in a convenient way, which could lead to a sustained increase in demand, he said.

Instant coffee imports by South Korea, where Dalgona coffee was popularized, surged 65% in March to \$8.5 million from a year ago, according to Fitch Solutions. Given South Korea eventually turned out to be one of the countries less severely affected by Covid-19, other nations could see a similar, or even larger increase in instant sales, said Consumer and Retail Analyst Taohai Lin. Korea has a sugar confection called Dalgona from which the name is derived.

Still, the instant coffee boom could fizzle as lockdowns ease across the world and consumers seek alternative ways to get their caffeine fix.

"Trends tend to move quite quickly, especially for food where novelty is key, so this demand, as seen in Korea, is likely to be short-lived," Lin said. "Of course, if it 'bucks the trend' and continues to generate interest, then the uptick in coffee demand will be more pronounced."