

Bagels, bread and sourdough— knead we say more?

By Harry Bielskis
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In this decade of liberation, both men and women are finding themselves crossing roles and pursuing job fields and hobbies traditionally limited to "the other sex."

For instance, it is not uncommon today to see women wearing hard hats, driving semi-trucks, or entering the field of politics. By the same token, more men are entering fields such as nursing and secretarial science. Even hobbies such as sewing, needlework and baking are becoming appealing to the masculine set.

This exchanging of roles is somewhat of a phenomena and when Clackamas Community College offered a three-part class in Creative Bread Making for Men, I decided to see why men would be motivated to do something long considered "women's work."

It was hard for me to imagine grown men in a baking class and the prospect of seeing a bunch of unshaven, cigar-toting men throwing flour around appeared quite humorous. I expected our instructor to be a chubby, aproned grandmother cheerfully holding a tray of freshly baked bread loaves while stating, "This is the way I expect yours to be, boys."

With a large spoon and mixing bowl I entered my first baking session and was surprised to find that we had a male instructor. Al Tekarius, a Lake Oswego shipbuilder, informed us that this class was his first teaching attempt, although he had once operated a restaurant in Indiana.

Tekarius spent the first half-hour trying to stifle our creative insecurity.

"My first bread attempt was a flop," he said. "Some people follow recipes right to the letter. I never do. Because this is a course for men, you are not expected to either. Be-

men, there were two women present. Carolyn Troychak was one.

"I bake regular bread and Albert (her husband) wanted to learn about sourdough baking but was afraid to come alone, so I tagged along," she said.

The other female was a companion I had brought along for much the same reasons that Troychak had brought his wife, except that I had no previous baking knowledge.

Our first session involved becoming acquainted with sourdough starter. Starter was originally bread made without yeast, and its use dates back to Medieval Europe. Because it can be kept and replenished for an indefinite period of time, baking enthusiasts cherish starter that has passed through several generations. It is a common belief that starter came to this country the same time as the pilgrims.

The older the starter, the more sour the bread. Authentic San Francisco sour dough bread, world famous for its bitter taste, is made from starter that was put together 60 or more years ago. Aside from bread, starter can be used to make biscuits, pancakes and rolls.

SOUR DOUGH STARTER

2 cups warm water
1 envelope active dry yeast
2 cups flour

Put all ingredients in blender container and cover. Process at low speed until smooth. Pour into a 2-quart mixing bowl and cover with cheesecloth. Leave in a warm room for 48 hours. Stir several times.

After 48 hours, cover with a tight-fitting cover and refrigerate. To use, stir, measure amount needed, then add equal parts of flour and water to remaining starter. Blend

Flour flies as men bake bagels and bread

sides, what can go wrong as long as the dough rises?"

His rule of thumb in baking is: "Never mind what it looks like, if it tastes good, you have been successful."

My fellow students consisted of four retirees, two middle-aged men, and three college students. Each had a different reason for taking the class.

"I've always messed around with bread-baking but never the sourdough end of it. It seems like it would be fun," said Howard Lehman, retired grocer.

"I wanted to learn the whole process because I'm a bachelor," said Ned Finnegan, CCC student.

While most of the attending students considered bread baking a hobby, Jed Brown of Mulino saw the class to be more of a necessity.

"My wife signed me up for the course," he said. "I didn't have any faith in her cooking and you'd starve to death with all the tin cans around the house."

Although the class was geared toward

in blender. Let stand 5 or 6 hours, covered with cheesecloth until it bubbles, then cover tightly and refrigerate.

If you wish to feed or replenish your starter, keep it in a plastic or ceramic container with a lid. Add one cup unbleached or all-purpose flour and enough tepid water to make a batter about the consistency of heavy cream. Let stand, covered, with lid and a towel at room temperature until the mixture is light and has a lot of bubbles.

If the container is placed in a warm place, the action will be faster. Use about $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 cup of the starter for a recipe and build up the remainder as above. The starter will keep in the refrigerator for three or four weeks, but it should be used or rejuvenated at least every 30 days.

After we were familiar with the ingredients, we proceeded to mix, knead and shape our first loaves of sour dough bread. (Question: Does dough have to be kneaded? Answer: Yes, if you want to make any bread!)

Because the session was only three hours long, we took our bread home to rise and



Harry Bielskis, Cougar Press, cooking at home, brought Men on a whim of the

agreed to bring in samples of the product the following week.

The second week we compared and commented on its taste and

"I worked about five hours of loaves of bread, tasted them and would die!" said one disappointed maker.

