

Swedish treat

Mastering the cardamom bun

By RICK NELSON
Minneapolis Star Tribune

MINNEAPOLIS — Ruth Raich has happy memories of childhood visits to Sweden, helping her grandmother make kardemummbullar. What the English-speaking world calls the cardamom bun is a core component of fika, the civilized Swedish practice of a coffee-and-snack break.

What a treat! Cardamom buns are tender but chewy, slightly sweet and ringed with a bracing burst of cardamom. Just looking at these sculpted beauties, their tops glistening with sugar, instantly invokes temptation.

Starting in the late 1980s, Raich's take on the classic kardemummbullar became a trademark item at each incarnation of her popular baking-centric businesses.

Although her Jenny Lind Cafe in Stockholm, Wisconsin, and Smokey Row Cafe in Red Wing are in Raich's past, she continues — thankfully — to produce cardamom rolls, baking batches of them several days a week in the cozy Jenny Lind wholesale bakery that she built inside a converted chicken coop on the farm near Maiden Rock, Wis., that she shares with her wife.

My husband, Robert, first encountered Raich's cardamom rolls in the 1990s and has craved them ever since. (Call them "rolls" or "buns," the meaning is the same; Raich invokes the former.) He introduced me to their splendors more than 20 years ago, and I've been similarly hooked.

Several months ago, I stumbled upon a copy

of "Favorite Recipes of the Jenny Lind Bakery & Cafe," Raich's 2014 cookbook, and was delighted to discover that it included a recipe for her signature rolls.

My first attempts — tough, bland, ungainly, sometimes all three — were pallid imitations of Raich's handiwork. What was I doing wrong? My late grandmother Hedvig, the daughter of Swedish farmers, could perform magic with flour and yeast, so you'd think that baking DNA might intervene. Nope.

I called Raich and invited myself to her workplace for a tutorial. Observing this baker in her native habitat was a study in economy of movement. Years of routine means that Raich can seamlessly and simultaneously turn out scones, cookies and three variations of fist-sized sweet rolls: almond, cinnamon and cardamom, all while coaching an amateur on the ins and outs of handling an egg-rich yeasted dough.

After that invaluable lesson, my next few batches, while not identical to Raich's expert output, were reasonable facsimiles. My kneading abilities are hardly intuitive, and I don't have her practiced panache when it comes to twisting the dough into beautifully layered buns. But I'm determined to get there.

Thanks to Raich's skill and generosity, my 2022 New Year's resolution is to bake more cardamom buns. You should, too. The recipe may appear daunting, but once you get the hang of it, it's easy — honest — and the effort is so worth it.

Tips from the expert

- Troubleshooting: "When it comes to making cardamom rolls, people usually encounter three



Cardamom buns from Jenny Lind Bakery.

Rick Nelson/Minneapolis Star Tribune-TNS

problems," said Raich. "They didn't knead long enough, so there's not enough protein structure that allows the dough to rise. Or they added too much flour. Or the liquid was too hot and it killed the yeast."

- Kneading, part 1: "When people are kneading by hand, they get tired," she said. "It's always going to be more than you think, especially for beginner bakers, and so I always tell people that when you want to stop, keep going for 2 to 5 more minutes."

- Kneading, part 2: Still, Raich advises utilizing a stand mixer fitted with a bread hook. "It keeps you from adding too much flour," she said. At her bakery, in the mammoth 30-quart Hobart mixer she calls "Francine," Raich kneads the dough, on medium speed, for 3 minutes. "But home mixers have less powerful motors, so they should knead longer," she said, which explains the recipe's extended knead time. When it's ready, the dough should feel smooth but stick slightly to the bottom of the bowl.

- Warming up: For the first proof, consider

placing the covered bowl in an unheated gas-powered oven. "The oven's pilot light will keep it warm enough," she said. For the second proof, place the baking sheets near a radiator, or on tables or counters that are bathed in sunlight.

- Air dry: If the dough feels too wet and sticky after the first proof, Raich scrapes it onto a lightly floured work surface and lets the dough sit in the open air, untouched, for about 15 to 20 minutes, then rolls it out.

- Working by hand: When spreading butter across the rolled dough, Raich uses her hands rather than a spatula. Also, avoid melted butter. "It's easier to keep it on the dough if the butter is soft — at room temperature — rather than if it's melted," she said.

- Flavor booster: Raich grinds whole cardamom seeds, and there's one big reason: The flavor is more robust than using packaged ground cardamom. And there's one caveat: "Cardamom seeds are hard on grinders," she said. A mortar and pestle also work.

- Touch test: For those without an instant-read

thermometer, rely upon your senses. "The liquid should be 'baby bottle' warm," she said. "It's body temperature."

- Egg wash: Don't skip this step. "It keeps the roll from getting dry, and it gives them color," she said. Use milk, and the results will be a soft, brown roll. Use water, and the top will be crispy but not brown. Use an egg wash, and the roll will be brown and delicately crispy on top.

- Twist tutorial: Raich has a helpful YouTube video where she demonstrates her technique for twisting spiraled dough into shapely buns, and it's worth watching. Find it at [youtube.com/watch?v=RCNht2N_47Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCNht2N_47Q).

CARDAMOM BUNS

Makes 1 dozen buns.

Note: This dough must be prepared in advance. Adapted from "Favorite Recipes of the Jenny Lind Bakery & Cafe," by Ruth Raich (\$22).

For dough

6 tbsp. (¾ stick) unsalted butter, melted and cooled, plus more (at room temperature) for greasing bowl

1 ¼ c. plus 2 tbsp. whole milk
3 eggs, lightly beaten
¼ c. plus 2 tbsp. sugar
1 tbsp. instant dry yeast
1 ½ tsp. salt
5 c. flour, plus more for rolling dough

For filling

¾ c. sugar
2 tbsp. ground cinnamon
2 tbsp. ground cardamom
4 tbsp. (½ stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature

For topping

1 egg
1 tbsp. water
Sanding sugar or pearl sugar

To prepare dough: Grease a large bowl with room-temperature butter and set aside.

In a microwave-safe bowl, combine the cooled melted butter, milk and 3 beaten eggs, and heat in microwave oven, in 30-second increments, until mixture reaches 100 degrees on an instant-read thermometer (do not exceed 100 degrees).

Pour mixture into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a bread hook. Add ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar, yeast and salt, and mix on medium speed until combined. Reduce speed to low, add 4 ¾ cups flour and mix until the flour is incorporated into the liquid and the dough comes together, about 2 minutes.

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Paint, hardware and a noodle shop

The varied history of the Haworth-Coolidge building

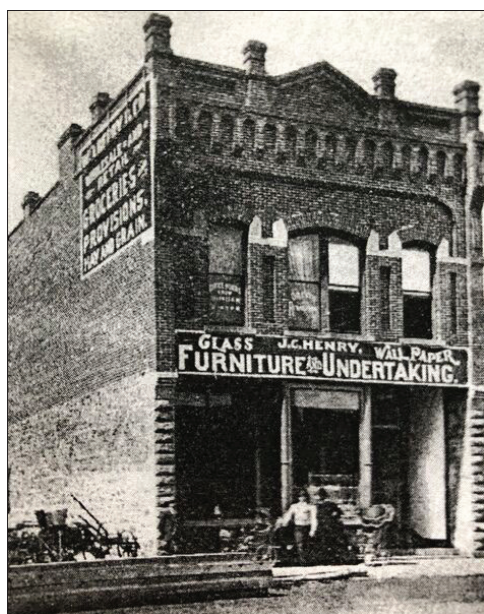


GINNY MAMMEN
OUT AND ABOUT

After the fire of 1959 that destroyed the Huntington Block, there were still two buildings remaining on the south side of the 1300 block of Adams Avenue in downtown La Grande. The one at 1314 Adams, originally known as the Haworth Building, had been constructed prior to 1893 by Samuel R. Haworth. This was the same S.R. Haworth who was a local contractor and businessman operating a paint store in the Huntington Building in 1893, who constructed the Buzzini Building in 1898 and who had done the stonework for the sugar factory building.

The attractive two-story Haworth Building was constructed of stone on the street and basement level and brick on the upper level at the cost of \$8,000. One of the first occupants was J.C. Henry with his furniture and undertaking business. He remained here until he and J.J. Carr went together to form Henry and Carr and moved to a new location.

The next occupant was Oscar F. Coolidge. Oscar moved to La Grande in 1900 and within the next few years purchased S.R. Haworth's paint and wallpaper business located in the Huntington Building and moved it into the Haworth Building



Contributed Photo

The Haworth-Coolidge building in downtown La Grande.

next door, which he had also purchased. This remained a paint and wallpaper store for the next 30 years. Because of the long association with the Coolidge name, the building took on the name of either Haworth or Coolidge. Oscar Coolidge passed away quite unexpectedly in May 1930.

In 1932 the occupant at 1314 Adams was Safeway Store No. 359, one of the four Safeway stores in La Grande at the time.

Then from the late 1940s and to the mid '50s this was the home for Western Auto.

By 1956 Ann Johnson's store for ladies apparel, a longtime favorite of several generations of La Grande's women, had moved

to this location. Ann had opened her first store in La Grande in 1934 and had moved once before finally moving to 1314 Adams.

The Haworth Building offered something different from most — space for various businesses in the basement. In June of 1919 the Pyramid Land Company had its office here and when it left, Frank Stillwell's print shop moved in.

Probably the second floor had the most remembered business of the building.

For a number of years it had offices for a variety of occupants. Dr. Richardson was one of these as was Richard McCann, a bookkeeper. And at one time there was also Dr. Mayville, a mechano therapy physician. In 1880 mechano therapy was defined as "the employment of mechanical means for the cure of disease." But the most remembered occupant of the second floor was Mary's Noodle Parlor operated by Wong Sing and his wife, Mary.

Wong Sing was truly an entrepreneur, investing in both real estate and restaurants. He had been born in 1867 in San Francisco to parents who had emigrated from China. Although it is unknown when he came to La Grande, it is known that he was working here as an employee at the Boston Lunch in the late teens. Mary, whose Chinese name was Hum, was born in China in 1892 and immigrated in 1918. By 1920 she and Wong were married and working together.

The 1920s had some ugly goings on in La Grande and although the Sings had their share of troubles they persevered. In November of 1920, while Wong was employed at the Boston Lunch, there was a robber who broke in and took \$27 and later that same month there was another rob-

bery and over \$100 was taken. In 1921 the Boston Lunch was raided by police looking for bootleggers.

The Sings took over the proprietorship of the Boston Lunch in 1922 and changed the name to the Noodle House. Two years later Wong and Mary were charged with possession of narcotics and selling opium, but they were tried and found not guilty.

In 1928 the building owner decided to raze the building housing the Noodle House so Wong moved his business east on Adams to the upper floor of the Coolidge Building, where he and Mary opened Mary's Noodle Parlor.

Wong was 25 years older than Mary and they found much needed help in Henry Wong Sun, a grandson who had come over from China. Wong Sing died in 1931 leaving Henry and Mary to run the Noodle Parlor. In 1938 they did a complete remodel of the restaurant and were even more popular with the community than ever.

An interesting note about Mary. The 1930 Census stated that she spoke no English, only Chinese. It is unknown when Mary was no longer at the restaurant, but Henry continued running the Noodle Parlor at least until 1955 when he and his family were involved in a fatal automobile crash in which his wife, Kay, was killed. Henry was left with four young children. It is unknown exactly when, but he did move to Portland where in 1960 he married his wife, Louise.

Keep looking up! Enjoy!

Ginny Mammen has lived in La Grande for more than 50 years and enjoys sharing her interest in the history of people, places and buildings.