

Fasnacht Tradition

(Continued from Page B4)

p.m.), and Ken is assigned the job of getting up at 3:00 a.m. to knead it down. After that the dough rises a second time before being rolled into fasnachts.

Bright and early on the big day, Dottie gets up and turns on the gas oven in the basement of the farm house to heat the small basement area where they will work. About 7:00 a.m. the work of rolling and cutting begins. At this point, Aunt Clara who lives down the road, arrives to do her share. Dottie and Clara roll and cut, roll and cut.

The Musser family makes fasnachts with holes in them, because that is their tradition. They keep just a few of the "holes" for deep frying, and the rest are rolled up for additional doughnuts. Pretty quickly the basement begins to look, feel and smell like bakery. There are cloth-covered plywood boards everywhere, filled with doughnuts which are now rising for the third time. The room is toasty warm, and the doughnuts do their work while the two men set the lard on the stove to begin to heat.

Lard is preferred by Aunt Clara who adds, "I didn't get used to these oils. I don't use too many substitutes."

Dottie uses a long pan, about eight inches deep for the actual cooking of the fasnachts. It covers two burners of the stove, and will hold about a dozen fasnachts. She has a thermometer in it at all times. After all, she doesn't want them ruined at this stage of the game.

This basement room, spotlessly clean, with a cement floor which lends itself to hosing down, is perfect for fasnachts, but also perfect for preparing sweet corn for the freezer. Aunt Clara is in on that one, too, in fact wouldn't miss it. "I enjoy doing it," she says.

With the oil is hot, a fasnacht is put in for testing. The oil does not quite react as it should, so the women wait. Soon though, they drop the raised fasnachts into the lard, and the familiar sizzle tells them it is perfect. Pat's job is to watch the fasnachts, turning them once, and

taking them out when they are done. Dottie says, "Pat has a good eye." As she takes them out she puts a few in a bowl with paper toweling, to get off excess fat and hands them over to Dottie and Aunt Clara who spread them out to dry on paper toweling on top of newspapers which cover every available surface.

Clara says they are only good when they have a "white belly," meaning the doughnuts should be raised so high that a small ring in the middle doesn't quite get browned by the lard as the fasnachts cook.

Presently Ken shows up from the work he is doing at the dairy, and gets the pleasure of tasting the first fasnacht fresh from the fat. As Dottie pulls it open, it appears perfect, and Ken happily goes off to eat the delicacy.

Soon Dottie insists that the helpers (this includes me, who has done nothing but take pictures and a relative who dropped in with her small son to watch the proceedings) taste the fasnachts. She says that her family eats it with lots of butter and King's syrup. Since I have never eaten them this way, she gives me a demonstration, and I happily munch on this wonderful taste treat. Is there anything quite so good as a fresh fasnacht literally dripping with butter and syrup? This is no time to count calories.

As the cooking continues the atmosphere is jovial. Dottie says, "We have to have a system." And so these three women each know their job and by 10:30 a.m. the last of the fasnachts have been dipped from the hot fat, the stove turned off and the outside door opened to get some fresh air.

There is only the cleaning up to be done, and the best part of all - packing them in dozens and half dozens to be delivered to relatives who benefit from all this work. And, Dottie adds that she doesn't believe in waiting until Fasnacht Day to eat them, though they do freeze well.

And so, the Mussers have carried out the tradition for yet another year, a tradition which is not just fun, but also delicious!

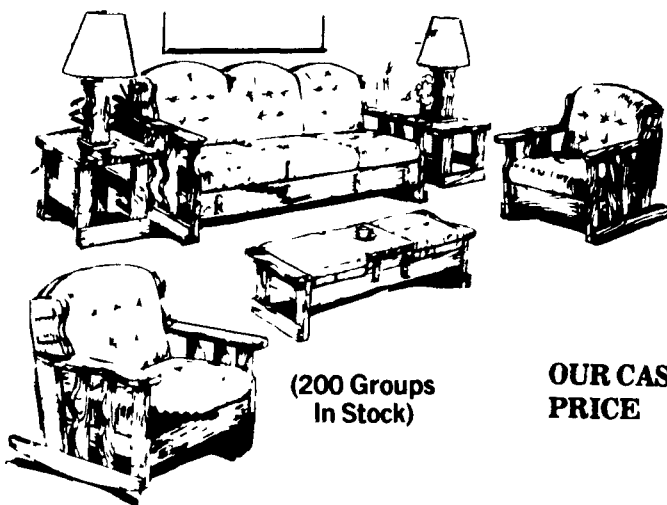
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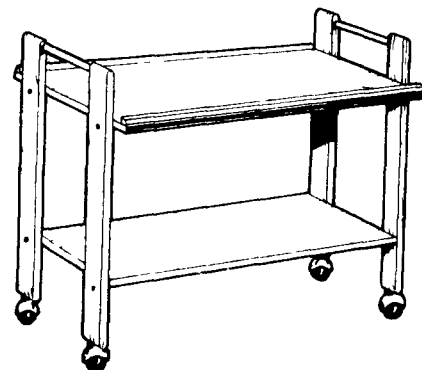
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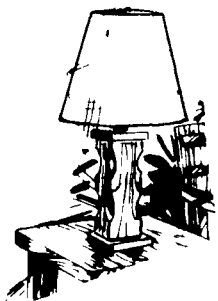
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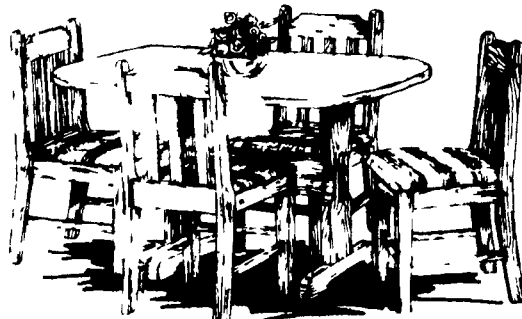


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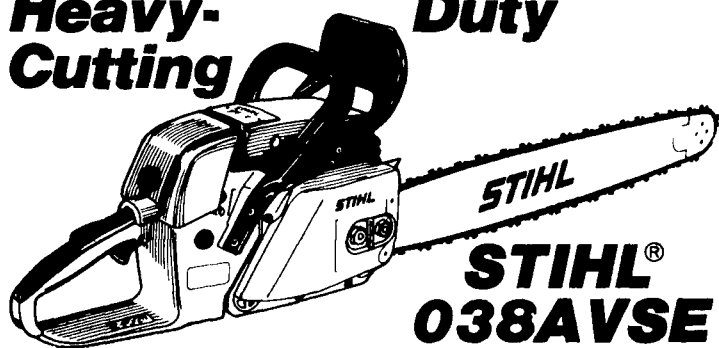
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