

Jane Treichler Known As Expert Fastnacht Maker

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KUTZTOWN (Berks Co.) — For a few people, making fastnachts is an annual event on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, but for Jane Treichler, fastnacht making is enjoyed throughout the year. The expert fastnacht maker stirs up a batch whenever friends and family members request them.

Jolly and talkative, Jane's fingers fly as she rolls the dough and cuts the shapes with a custom-made cookie cutter. After the fastnachts double in size, Jane drops them in hot oil. When the first side is browned, she flips them over. When browned, she uses a large fork to remove them, drains off the oil, and lets them cool on a clean tablecloth.

As she works, Jane tells about growing up on a farm where she was the youngest in a family with eight girls and three boys.

"My mother baked three times a week to fill six shelves with pies. I liked to watch her make pies and often begged to help," Jane said.

But her mother brushed off Jane's offer by saying that she could do it faster.

One day Jane asked, "How will I be able to make pies when I get married if you never let me try it?"

Eventually, Jane was allowed to make the pies, but she never forgot the longing she had to bake at a young age.

"Now, whenever the grandchildren come, I get out the dishes and ask, 'What would you like to bake today?'" Jane said.

Usually the grandchildren, who range from age 5 to 14, ask to make shoo fly pies or rolled cookies.

With Jane's specific, easy-to-follow directions, the grandchildren do every step of the baking project and then take home the finished project for eating.

The fastnacht recipe is one that Jane adapted after watching her mother make many times.

She still cooks the potatoes for the dough, but she no longer fries them in lard.

"I use canola oil to fry them in because many people say they can't take the fat," Jane said.

Her mother had cut the fastnacht-shapes with a knife, but Jane had a custom tin cutter made.

"It's much faster," she said.

Speed is a quality that is vital in

Jane's life, for she helps her husband milk the cows morning and evening.

"I rarely miss a day. I must be really sick or in the hospital before I wouldn't milk," she said.

When Jane married in 1952, she and her husband Feryl moved into the farm house where they still live. The house was completely furnished and newly remodeled by the man who owned it. He lived in the city and wanted the farm as a vacation spot. In exchange for maintaining the property and keeping a room available for his occasional visits, the Treichlers lived in the house rent free. Because the Treichlers wanted to dairy farm, the owner set the barn up for dairy. Four years later, the owner decided that he wasn't making any money off the farm so he sold it to the Treichlers.

The original farm was 48 acres, but over the years, the Treichlers purchased a neighboring farm and some land and now farm 500 acres. They milk 50 Holsteins and raise about 60 young stock and some feeder steers.

Most of the acreage is used for grain, which they sell.

Twenty years ago, the Treichlers built a free stall barn with a flat barn for milking.

The barn is now outdated. "We sweep down every day and my knees get stiff from getting up and down," Treichler said, "but I don't foresee putting in a new system. There are advantages to our barn. We don't need to use as much water as some operations because the cows are kept inside all day."

They also need to spread manure every day. "But we don't have the odors that guys do with a manure pit," he said. "I won't put a manure system in unless I'm forced to do so," he said.

The Treichlers use minimum tillage. Soil tests determine how many, if any, fertilizer is needed. Crops are rotated every three years and soil analysis is based upon rotation.

Although the farm appears to be secluded, it is within a short distance of a campground and of a 70-apartment complex.

Treichler puts forth a lot of effort not to irritate his neighbors. "I don't haul manure next to the campgrounds on weekends and I try to clean up anything that drops on the road. I take a rack along with me and clean up any fodder that spills," he said.

He wishes the public would be more considerate of the farmland. The Treichlers have problems with cars using their fields for race

tracks and dumping trash in them. Much of the problem seems to be caused by students attending a nearby college.

One thing that Jane always desired was to have a job away from home. She said, "Because I was the youngest child, I was told I couldn't get a job away from home. My twin sister, could — because she was 5 minutes older than me."

Jane was expected to stay home and do the cleaning and laundry. When the Treichlers married, it was not considered proper for a wife to work outside the home, but after the Treichlers' two sons married and no longer lived at home, Jane begged her husband to let her get a job outside the home.

"My husband didn't like the idea at first," Jane said. "I guess I have him spoiled because the food is always ready."

Jane now cooks at the Leesport Auction one day a week.

"But I don't renege on my home responsibilities," Jane said. "I always make sure that I have plenty of lunch made ahead of time for them," she said. "Them" refers to Feryl and son Keith who lives nearby and works on the farm full time.

Jane also milks the cows before she goes to work and after she comes home.

Her love for natural beauty is evident by the 17 flower beds that she has planted around the barn and house.

"I weed them after supper," Jane said. In the winter, she pieces quilts.

She and her husband are active 25-year members of the Virgenville Grange, where Jane has helped cook for more banquets and receptions than she can remember. She is in charge of the baked goods, and sometimes makes as many as 27 pie crusts at one time.

At county fairs, Jane has won prizes for her chiffon and lemon sponge cakes.

In 1971, The Treichlers were named Outstanding Young Farmer and in 1975, they were the Outstanding Farm Family. They are



Jane Treichler

previous recipients of the community service award from Pennsylvania Young Farmers.

Jane is proud that in 1979, son Keith and his wife Sue were national grange couple runnerup.

Feryl is a township supervisor, treasurer of the Virgenville Grange, and serves on the legislative committee of the Pocoma Grange. Both he and his wife are on the Reading Fair Board, and he is the emcee for the tractor pulling events at Kempton and Kutztown. Feryl and his son do lots of hunting for bear, deer, and turkey.

"We work hard to get away," said Feryl who with his son get up at 2 a.m. to milk, leave at 5 a.m. to hunt, and return at 5 p.m. to milk.

They are Atlantic Dairy Cooperative members with half of the red and white Holsteins and the other half black and white.

Although Jane works from sunup to sundown, she rarely feels tired. She said, "I was taught to work. I feel funny if I sit down and relax."

Jane thinks she has the best life around. She said, "I'm not jealous of anyone else who has a bigger or newer house. I like my home. I guess I'm really content because I like what I'm doing."

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Most people connect fastnachts with a once a year event, but Jane makes them throughout the year for family and friends who say hers are the best.



After many years of cutting the dough with a knife, Jane had a custom-made cookie cutter made, which makes the job easier and faster.



These fastnachts are golden brown and ready to be cooled.



Jane serves lunch everyday to her husband Feryl and son Keith, who works full time on the farm. On this day, grandson Brett joins the family for some of his grandmother's homemade barley soup.

Homestead Notes