



Front, left to right: Lisa, 21; Laura, 3; Sara, 10; Julia, 14; back, left: Nathan, 12; right: Jonathan, 14.

Family Tradition Means This Brood Bakes Up A Storm

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DOWNINGTOWN (Chester Co.) — In an airy country kitchen, mix together six brothers and sisters, ages 3 to 21; add one mother; stir in dough, seasonal fruit, and various utensils and mixing bowls. Bake until done just right. Result: pies and short cake, crisps and cobblers, and breads. And a family tradition.

The reader may remember the Lamar and Mary Howe family from an earlier Lancaster Farming article featuring their turkey operation. This brood can also bake up a storm!

A visit to the Howe kitchen often finds them making apple and mince meat pies and apple crisp.

A five-foot-by-five-foot kitchen table, made by Lamar and Mary's son-in-law, provides the bakers with ample work space. A picture window next to it provides plenty of light.

Baking is a bi-weekly event for the Howes. They bake pies in quantity, usually at least eight at a time, for their family and friends. "We do a lot of cooking for people in our church," said Lisa. "When the women have babies, we [help] provide meals for a couple of weeks after the baby is born."

Amid the clatter of utensils, bowls, and voices, Mary patiently instructs the younger children. She starts the children baking at a

young age. "As soon as they can get their hands in it (the dough) and roll it with a rolling pin," she said.

They begin by making little snacks from little bits of dough with butter, sugar, and cinnamon on them. From that, they go on to measuring ingredients, helping cut up fruit, and making pie crust.

Where did Mary get the idea to start the kids baking when they're young?

Mary said, "My mother used to do this with us (Mary and her siblings) when we were young. We got the ends to make our own pie. It was a way for us to be involved. So I started doing it with our kids."

And what do the Howe family bakers bake? That depends on the season. According to Lisa, "In the summer time we bake strawberry shortcake. We also have a lot of fresh fruit in the summer. So we have fruit cobblers. In the fall we start baking bread, or pumpkin pies and pumpkin bread."

Looking out the kitchen picture window, past the yard, one sees the 10 apple trees the Howes tend. Apples are the only fruit they grow themselves. A neighbor supplies the rest. The turkeys and a very large vegetable garden take priority.

Lamar and Jonathan watch the goings-on from the kitchen counter opposite the picture window.

Lamar doesn't help with the baking, but he can cook. His specialty? Cooked rice and beans.

"When he makes that, we're all glad," Mary said. Lisa nods her head in agreement.

The family has never entered any baking or cooking contests. But Mary admits to having thought about it. "The boys' (Jonathan's and Nathan's) winning entry," she said, "would be breakfast. They love making breakfast." Meaning a good country breakfast of eggs, potatoes, bacon, and sausage.

Meanwhile, little Laura makes herself comfortable among the bowls and pie pans on the kitchen table. The better to reach the flour and throw it into the air, you see.

Mary has a favorite cookbook. A cover-less, dog-carred, well-thumbed cookbook. It was a wedding gift. She also likes the *More With Less* cookbook.

Soon the pies and crisp are ready to go into the oven. The Howe kitchen has a double oven, to bake all those pies at one time. And in a short while, the aroma of fresh-baked goodies fills the kitchen.

The Howe "bakery" also makes bread and "pull" buns. Nathan, Jonathan, and Sara punch and knead the dough, then portion it into several bread pans for baking. Julia and Nathan make some of the dough into thin, flat strips,



Mixing up another batch of bread dough is a common occurrence in the Howe family.



Nathan and Sara knead dough.

which they then rolled up into "pull" buns. Jonathan helps Laura make roly polies.

Sometimes Mary prepares some dough in the afternoon so it is ready for the evening's baking. While that dough becomes bread, Sara mixes another batch for baking the next day. Mary's recipe is basic whole wheat bread, with one added ingredient. "We found it works better if we put a little oatmeal in it," she said.

The eight-member Howe family eats a lot of bread. So, Mary said, "We make bread every couple of days; three or four loaves at a time."

Between raising turkeys, working the garden, tending the apple trees, and growing plants in their greenhouse, as well as 4-H, and church activities, Lamar and Mary's busy family still finds time to do all the necessary baking. And to continue a family tradition.

Homestead Notes



Jonathan helps Laura make roly polies.



Sara, Julia, and Laura busy at work.