

Time To Prepare Paczki For Ash Wednesday's Tradition

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PORTAGE (Cambria Co.) — In these parts, just mentioning the word "paczki" will probably put a smile on the faces of many people. There may be a wave of nostalgia or perhaps even a yearning for simpler times. What exactly does this word mean?

"Paczki" is a Polish word describing a doughnut-like fried pastry made from a rich bread dough. Originally, paczki was a quick

treat made for the children from dough that was rolled out slightly and then cut into squares, circles, strips, and other shapes and deep-fried. Other ethnic groups have their own specific words for these little delicacies but they are all basically made the same way. They can be coated with sugar, cinnamon sugar, confectioners' sugar, or filled with jelly.

Roseann Barnas of R.D. Portage provided little background, recipe, and a "how-to" demonstra-

tion about paczki. Her two granddaughters, Deanna and Grace Troxel, ages 4 and 6, were there to lend a hand. Roseann grew up with one sister and two brothers and fondly remembers her mother making paczki for the children. She recalls that as kids, she and her siblings looked forward to mother's bread-making days. They knew that any leftover bread dough would be turned into treats for the children.

In past years, people seemed to ascribe more to the "waste not, want not" way of life. Times were tough. Folks raised their own cows, pigs, and chickens and used almost every bit for something. Bones were saved for soup and lard was rendered from the animal fat. This was what was used for frying the paczki. Needless to say people didn't watch their diets or cholesterol intake as much as they do now.

Roseann recalls that some of the flour used years ago was surplus flour and at times not much good for baking. It was not thrown out but used for things like paczki or pancakes.

After Roseann married, she and her husband had eight children: John, Jr., Mary Lou, Veronica, Eileen, Rose, Linda, Georgiann, and Marsha. Mary Lou says that her mom made paczki for the family just as her grandmother had. The family now includes a daughter-in-law and sons-in-law, 17 grandchildren, and one great-grandson. Granddaughter Grace says that little Deanna is the paczki eater in their house but they also had a special order to fill for their mom Marsha who wanted paczki coated with cinnamon sugar.

Traditionally Fat Tuesday is Paczki Day. In the past, fasting regulations during Lent for various religious groups were more strict than they are today. Since paczki



Roseann Barnas, with grandchildren, Grace and Deanna Troxel, ages 6 and 4, forming paczki.



Grace, Deanna, and Doug reaping the fruits of their labor.



Deanna, sugaring cinnamon paczki, to fill her mom's special order.



Grace (left) and Deanna resting after a hard day's work.

is a sweet treat, quite a few were eaten on the day before Ash Wednesday because these, along with other sweets, were "given up" for Lent. A local supermarket chain takes orders for paczki for Fat Tuesday.

The busy lifestyles of today's families prevent many homemakers from making homemade bread. Quick paczki can be made with frozen bread dough or by deep frying refrigerator biscuits. The taste is similar. These are big sellers in the area during the church picnic season.

Roseann was gracious enough to share her recipe. It is one that she has used for many years and

claims that there is nothing special about it other than its being a richer bread dough recipe. Her granddaughters helped with the "sugaring" but Grace reminded grandma that they were not allowed anywhere near the stove while grandma was doing the actual paczki-making.

When the paczki-making was finished, 17-year-old grandson, Doug came in to do his part — eating this special treat.

Rich White Bread

4½ -5 cups all purpose flour (do not use self-rising flour)
½ cup warm (not hot) water
2 packages active dry yeast
¾ cup lukewarm milk
¼ cup sugar
2 teaspoons salt
¼ cup shortening
2 eggs

Spoon flour (not sifted) into dry measuring cup. Level off and pour measured flour onto waxed paper. Soak yeast in ½ cup warm (not hot) water for five minutes.

Combine lukewarm milk, sugar, and salt in large mixing bowl. Stir to dissolve.

Beat in shortening, eggs, yeast mixture, and 2 cups flour (not sift-

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