

Crossroads Comments



From Mae's Archives—March, 1993

Bread of Life

Bread is often called the staff of life. What an appropriate name for a food that is so much a part of our diet. Ethnic breads are readily available to satisfy the taste of most everyone. This is evidenced by the diversity of breads that line the shelves of our supermarkets.

The fundamentals of bread making are simple. Most bread requires the same basic ingredients, whether they are plain or exotic creations. More pleasure and satisfaction are mine from baking a perfect loaf of traditional white bread or dinner rolls than any other spectacular baked goodies that come from my oven. The enticing yeasty aromatic air that fills the kitchen as the bread slowly bakes brings back memories of my mother's comforting country kitchen. The hearty and gratifying breads she lovingly made for her family were the staple food on our table. Unless we had bread, we weren't eating! Freshly churned butter and homemade berry jam made it even more special.

Bread is a satisfying food. Many years ago I enjoyed the daily responsibility of baking breads for four hundred school children. The staff knew if the children were served a fresh dinner roll warm from the oven, they did not complain too much about the spinach on their tray. This was true of my own four kids. They hardly noticed the lumpy grave served over even more lumpy masked potatoes if there was a plentiful supply of freshly baked dinner rolls to enjoy.

Bread making cannot be rushed. It takes time for the yeast to activate and form gasses that cause the dough to rise and become light. When the Israelites hurriedly left Egypt they did not have time to prepare food for the journey. They mixed bread dough omitting the yeast and carried this mixture in their kneading troughs. I think this unleavened bread was the original course textured, tough but edible, chewy bagel. In their desert wanderings the Israelites ate the "her-to-fore unknown bread" rained from heaven. They called it "manna" which means, "What is it?" Ezekiel ate his same special bread for 390 days. There is a bakery in a valley town not far from here that bakes Ezekiel 43:9 bread. Sounds a bit too grainy for my taste.

Earth grain breads satisfy only the human appetite. In John, Jesus said to the Capernaum crowd, "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and are dead. I am the living Bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread he will live forever."

We are made in the image of God and are created with a built-in hunger for the true Bread of Heaven. Contrary to new-age philosophy we must reach outside ourselves for spiritual sustenance. If not, our inner spiritual hunger can never be satisfied because we "feed on ashes." (Isaiah 44:30) Jesus said unto them,

"I am the Bread of Life; he that comes to me shall never hunger and he that believes in me shall never thirst." (John 6:35)

My heartfelt cry joins with the crowd at Capernaum, "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

Mae Cromwell-Bakay
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Crossroads Comments
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