

kc

Kane County Magazine

JULY 2021

*vintage &
Americana*

GENEVA CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE

Beloved car show
returns this year

Page 12

THE BUZZ ON LOCAL BEER

Sample these 8 local
breweries and taprooms

Page 20

LA MICHOACANA SHOPS

These frozen delights make
the perfect refreshing treat

Page 24

Summer PICNIC

Add local flavor to your backyard party this July! | Page 7

a fresh take



PIONEER ROOTS

GENERATIONS PAST INSPIRE MY MODERN-DAY “HOMESTEAD”

With Katie McCall, owner of Two Wild Seeds bakery

Ever since I was a little girl, I've been taught to honor what came before me. I used to curiously peek over my mom's shoulder as she, a self-made family history buff, spent decades of her adult life researching and combing through passed-down articles, photos and heirlooms — ultimately piecing together thick binders bursting with our ancestors' stories.

While our roots date back to the 1600s in America, one particular photo always struck a chord with me: my great-great-grandmother Eva standing in front of a one-room structure built by my great-grandparents Florence and Edwin Cook during their first year of homesteading in Montana in 1912. On the back of the photo, Florence wrote: “Doesn't it look like a bridal mansion.”

As I sit here writing in my kitchen, a small lump has formed in my throat while I imagine the daily hardships they endured. I find myself surrounded by the modern-day conveniences of hot water, appliances, a refrigerator and pantry stocked with food ... things we all too often take for granted.

Yet, I've always innately yearned to lead a simple and self-sustaining lifestyle, and on some cellular level, I can't help but believe it's a part of my DNA. I grew up watching my mom and grandparents garden on our land; in middle school I asked for soap-making supplies; and over the years, book titles like “Modern Pioneering,” “Country Skills,” “Natural Remedies” and “Backyard Homesteading” have taken over my shelves.

My ancestors were true pioneers, and though homesteading was a result of the government displacing the Indigenous Native Americans* from their land without warning, I find value in the skills and hardships my ancestors faced during these years.

My great-grandparents' homestead was situated near the railroad town of Glendive, Montana, where they would travel to and from with a horse-drawn buckboard wagon, hauling from the general store the supplies and food that couldn't be raised, grown, hunted, foraged or made on the communal farms.

Most homesteads kept two “kitchen gardens;”

the first round supplying delicate lettuces, herbs, peas and radishes in the spring, followed by late summer crops producing heartier bounty like beans, potatoes, squash and pumpkins. Meats were salted, brined or dried for preservation, while vegetables were pickled and stored away for provisions during the colder months.

Over the years, tornadoes, dust storms, drought — and later, the Great Depression — created a plethora of challenges, like failed crops and loss of livestock. They quickly learned to make the best of what they had and found multiple uses for everyday items (like a baking powder can, which was not only used for the baking powder itself, but also as a cooking vessel for cornbread).

A prized family heirloom passed down to my mom is my great-grandmother's cookbook. I almost feel my great-grandmother speaking to me as I thumb through her handwritten recipes titled “Mama's last way to make bread,” and “Sunshine Cake” with conversational directions such as, “At noon, boil three good sized potatoes ...”

Today, there's good reason for modern-day

conveniences. Life was hard and inefficient — but it was anchored in hard work, perseverance and resilience, qualities that I, too, will pass down to my children and grandchildren. My little “homestead” currently only consists of growing a garden, composting kitchen scraps, making my own yogurt and canning vegetables — but every time I do it, I’d like to think my ancestors are proudly watching over me.

**Honoring the Assiniboine, Hidatsa, Mandan and Arikara Native tribes that were displaced where my ancestors set up their homestead.*



■ Katie McCall is a bona fide Midwestern girl. Raised on four acres of rural property in Yorkville, she was taught to respect nature and all of its bounty. From foraging morel mushrooms in the woods to picking wild raspberries for homemade jam, Katie feels most at home when in nature and preparing food for others. When she’s not running the downtown St. Charles bakery Two Wild Seeds, she can be found nose-deep in cookbooks, exploring the outdoors with her family — and eating ... always eating. Photo by Victoria C Photos.



HOMEMADE “MASON JAR” BUTTER

Return to the pioneer days with a fun activity for all ages! Get a good arm workout while honoring those who came before us — and had to churn cream at least 30 minutes for butter.

MAKES 1/2 CUP BUTTER

Store at room temperature 3-5 days or 1-2 weeks in the refrigerator.

- 1 cup heavy cream (38% fat)
- Pinch sea salt
- 16 oz. Mason jar or any large glass jar with a tight-fitting lid
- Fine mesh strainer
- Small bowl
- Glass of cold water
- Container for storing butter

Bring the cream to room temperature. Pour cream and a sprinkle of salt into the jar, filling halfway full. Screw the lid on tightly.

Begin to vigorously shake the jar, ensuring the cream hits all the way to the top of the lid. Shake for about 2 minutes. Peek inside, and you’ll see the cream thickening into what we’d enjoy as whipped cream. But we aren’t there yet ... screw the lid back on and keep shaking.

Shake for another 5-7 minutes; you’ll begin to hear more liquid in the jar — this is a good sign! It means the buttermilk is beginning to separate from the solids, leaving behind the pure butterfat.

Open the jar and check to find a clump of butter accumulating. You’re almost done! Close the lid and shake vigorously for another 30 seconds to remove any remaining buttermilk.

Open the jar and pour the contents through the fine mesh strainer. Save the buttermilk in the refrigerator for other baking needs, and then place the clump of butter in a small bowl.

With a glass of cold water, gently pour the water over the butter, rinsing off any residual buttermilk. Discard that water and rinse a few more times until the water is clear.

Take your butter out of the bowl, mold into a ball (or any shape you like) and enjoy on your favorite dishes! Try adding honey, herbs and spices to make a gourmet “compound butter.”