

We like to grow as much of our own food as possible. It is good to know where and how what we take into our bodies is produced, and it gives us a sense of security to have our winter's supply of nutrients here at home. If we have a cold, snowy winter with lots of bad roads, we don't need to worry about going to a store for food. It is all in the root cellar, the freezers, and the mason jars.

But, we have always purchased all of our flour. Last fall, though, we planted a tiny patch of Warthog wheat, and a couple of weeks ago, our good neighbors combined it. It wasn't much, and we have a bigger plot of an heirloom spring wheat called Red Fife that will soon be ready. But, the Warthog has a reputation for making good bread, so we thought we would try a little patch.

We knew there would be some weeds and chaff in the combined wheat, and there are ways to remove the unwanted substances without using any more than a ground cloth or tarp and a breezy day. One can pour the wheat from head high and watch the weed seeds and bits of wheat straw blow away in the wind.

But, in the barn, we had the old fanning mill, a tool that has been here on the farm for a century, mostly unused. I noticed in the faded letters on the wooden body that it was an "improved" model dated 1892. It would be fun to put that to use again. My father used to use it to clean seed oats.

The remnants of green and red paint can still be seen on the body of the fanning mill. And, it does just what its name suggests. Turning a crank on the side rotates fans inside the mill. Screens of declining "fineness" catch the particles of different sizes. The weed seeds and chaff are blown out one side while the cleaned grain falls to the floor on the other.

There were still some particles of mustard seeds and bits of chaff in the cleaned wheat, so we finished cleaning a few cups by hand and brought them into the kitchen. I think wheat should probably be left to "cure" for a few weeks before using, but we were too eager to sample the Warthog flavor to wait.

So, we ground our cleaned portion, and I made a little "starter" by

combining the flour, a tiny pinch of yeast, and some warm water. Then, I left it until the next day.

On baking day, I added more yeast, more warm water, some salt, a little honey, and a small amount of melted home-rendered lard. I beat in enough store-bought unbleached organic flour to make a dough, and made bread. We have been enjoying it ever since, and a portion of Warthog wheat will be a standard part of our daily bread from now on. This bread tastes good, and it also tastes of home. Whole wheat flour is one more food staple we will no longer need to buy.