

If we could grow our food and feed for our livestock without warm weather, I'd be most happy with a late fall/winter climate year round. But, we know we need heat for the garden, the fields, and the meadows. Still, last week's sweltering days and warm nights were, for me, very unpleasant. Two days of cool temperatures have revitalized me, and it is probably a good thing, since I understand that more heat is on the way.

That's why I spent yesterday forenoon baking. We do not buy bread, cookies, sweet rolls, or coffee cakes. But, we eat a lot of bread, and we like a little "sweet" with our coffee after morning barn chores. And, it has been too hot to bake, especially since heating the oven for the rye bread I bake involves high temperatures for an extended period. Our cabin—ordinarily a pretty cool place in all but the hottest weather—would become very uncomfortably warm.

I've "made do," as the saying goes, by making flat breads that can be baked on a skillet or in an electric fry pan. But, though easy to make, those breads involve a lot of time for individual baking, and we can eat them up rather quickly.

Yesterday, then, was a catch-up day in the kitchen. Since baking day generally involves some additions to my usual jeans and T-shirt apparel, I begin by tying a cotton scarf around my hair.

Then, I choose an apron. I seldom tie an apron on for ordinary cooking, but on baking day, I usually select one of my three favorite aprons to protect my clothes. Two are reversible. One has a sheep pattern on one side and a polka-dot print on its back. The other is red and white on one side and a dark print on the other. The third apron is dark green with a Dala horse pattern embroidered on the front.

I started my baking morning with what was most important. We need "kaka," our "daily bread." It is dark rye—freshly ground—and unbleached flour, yeast and sourdough starter, salt, a little maple syrup, and some melted lard or butter. This makes the chewy flat breads that we eat every day. The oven must be heated to a high temperature for this bread, so it is not something to tackle on a hot day. 500 degrees plus in the oven can soon heat up our small house.

While the kaka dough was rising, I baked two sheets of cookies from the dough I'd made the night before. When they were done, the kaka dough had risen and was ready to roll out into flat loaves.

As soon as that job was done, I started another yeast dough, this time to make five coffee cakes with cinnamon and cardamom, along with a little sugar, strewn on the buttery dough.

The kaka went into the oven first. I make eight flat breads in a batch, and each bakes five minutes on the pizza stone in the bottom of the oven, then is flipped to the rack above for another five minutes to finish. Another kaka can then be slid—with the maple baking peel Runo made years ago—on to the pizza stone.

In the meantime, with a few minutes that didn't need to be devoted to what I had already begun, I mixed the dough for a batch of sesame flat bread. After it had risen, I divided it into eight small balls and covered them for a few

minutes. When they were ready to bake, I rolled each out with a knobby rolling pin, making each round as thin as I could. Then, I baked them, one at a time, in the ungreased electric fry pan, turning them when they had golden brown spots.

So, by early afternoon, the top of the woodburning cookstove (no fire there, of course) and the kitchen counter were filled with baked goods. I packed it all up, stored it in the freezer, and felt a release from the near panic that I had felt as the hot days dragged on and on with no break for bread baking. In the evening, we finished up the preparation for the next phase of this seemingly extensive hot spell by making a batch of granola.

My only regret is that it would have been a very nice, cool morning to work in the garden. Still, a hot morning in the open air is easier to endure than a sweltering morning in a kitchen.