

Although the term would not have been used in previous generations, I believe that most of us have certain “default settings” that help determine what we do, how we spend our leisure hours, and what activity or activities we engage in when we have nothing that we must or should do.

These pastimes may be far removed from our daily duties, or, in many cases, they are just an extension of the work we do regularly. I know people who, if there is nothing else they have to do, clean house. I find this rather remarkable, and I am never sure if they really like to clean or if it is just that they are “pre-set” to get out the vacuum cleaner if they are unoccupied.

I am well aware of my own default settings, too. I know that if I have one or more unread books that I am looking forward to reading, I sometimes reject the “delayed gratification” concept that I believe is the right way to coordinate work and pleasure and instead, pick up the book, sit down in the midst of work I should do, and read.

Usually, though, I can wait until the most important tasks are out of the way before picking up a book.

But, I can go to another default activity that is part of my everyday work, but enhanced. I bake.

I like to bake. I don’t enjoy baking all possible breads, pastries, cookies, pies, etc., but those that I don’t find satisfying, I need not do. I cannot bake chocolate chip cookies, and I cannot bake the little ginger cookies that are made by rolling dough in balls, coating in sugar, and baking. In fact, I really don’t much like baking cookies of any kind. I do bake cookies, though, in spite of that.

I like to bake cakes, but I don’t like making frosting. But, I like frosting! So, that is always a question. Fortunately, there are other options that are just as tasty, and both Runo and I like a plain vanilla sponge cake with nothing to “dress it up.”

I don’t mind making pies, either, but I can’t make pretty pies. I do not have the knack of fluting or crimping a crust. But, I can make pies that taste good. That is not because of any innate talent for pie baking. It all comes down to ingredients, and we have delicious home churned butter from our grass fed cows, Lily and Halvan. And we have home rendered lard from pigs that we raised.

But, best of all, I like baking bread. It is fun to try different bread recipes from cultures around the world, but even baking our

“daily bread” is an activity I find particularly rewarding. And, it is a good thing that I do, because we eat a lot of bread. This bread we eat day in and day out is similar, though not exactly the same, as Runo grew up eating at home near the Swedish-Norwegian border. It is part coarse rye flour and part unbleached wheat flour. A touch of honey or maple syrup, yeast, salt, a bit of oil, butter, or lard, and water. When the dough has risen, I shape it first into balls and then into flat round *kakor*. I make this bread at least once a week, seven to nine loaves each time.

I make other bread, too, but this rather plain, crusty, brown bread is still our favorite, and it appears on the table twice or sometimes three times a day. When I look in the freezer and see that I am about to take out one of the last two or three *kakor*, I know that the next day will be baking day. And, if there were several loaves left, I would still be pretty sure to get out the baking equipment the next forenoon. There is always something to bake.