

Rising to the occasion

By **SHERRY HAAIMA**
Mercury Reporter

In the fast-paced way of modern-day life, many people are lucky if they remember to pick up that essential loaf of bread, let alone bake fresh bread to supply their family.

But Adele McLeod, life member of the Burnstown Women's Institute, has so perfected her homemade bread that she has not only won over her family but is credited with creating the second best bread in all of Ontario.

"Baking bread is a great way to get rid of your frustrations," she says, "And when you happen to get second in Ontario, it's incentive to try to keep on doing it."

McLeod won reserve champion with her loaf of 60 percent whole wheat bread at the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies Convention in Toronto, beating out breads from all over Ontario.

She won first prize at a competition in Delta and first at the Renfrew Fair. She had the top bread at the Arnprior Fair, as well, but says she was really surprised to learn of her big win in Toronto.

McLeod started baking bread with her mother over 70 years ago.

Back then, she says, you started the bread at night, rolled it up to keep it warm, and cooked it the next day.

So, what's her secret?

McLeod says she has no use for the modern yeast which produces a bread that is too solid for her liking.

Temperature is also a very important factor in producing good bread.

The ideal baking temperature used to be blood temperature, recalls McLeod, but it's a few degrees higher

for the new yeast.

Everybody needs to experiment to determine what works best for them when it comes to baking bread.

"What works for one doesn't work for another," she says.

Being on a dairy farm, where she lives with husband Allan, McLeod's bread is rich with fresh whole ingredients like milk, and even what ingredients to choose depends on the desired results, she says.

As for her recipe, McLeod says she uses the Fleischman's Yeast Best Ever Bread cook book. Because diet restrictions mean she can't have butter, McLeod says she has come to prefer brown bread, which offers more flavour than white.

With five sons, a daughter and eleven grandchildren, she has had lots of practice baking bread.

"I haven't bought a loaf of bread in 10 years," she says. And visitors don't go away empty-handed.

"They generally go home with a loaf of bread," she says with a smile.

McLeod is also a talented quilter, with her work being exported to far away places including Belgium and Switzerland.

Her first-place Renfrew Fair quilt went to New Jersey, says McLeod.

She jokes that her bread and quilts have travelled farther than she has.

She says she owes much thanks to the Renfrew Agricultural Society and manager Judy Dobec for her support.

Dobec says the Agricultural Society couldn't be happier about McLeod's win.

"We were really excited," she says, "It's the first time that anybody has won in the competition in Toronto."

"It's a big honour for your fair."



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