

The Pantry

Our pantry was a room off the kitchen. As you opened the door from the kitchen, you faced a full window (dressed with an organdy curtain, of course) looking toward the east, so the room was flooded with light. There were floor to ceiling cupboards on one side and open shelves on the other. The open shelves held the big pots, pans, bowls, etc., plus extra jars and boxed items. The cupboards were filled with dishes, silverware, baking supplies and some miscellaneous bottles. One section of the bottom cupboard held a pull out container which could hold 50 pounds of flour. That sounds like a great deal of flour but our mom baked all the bread and most of the baked goods for our family of seven. We had pie every Sunday; I especially enjoyed her gooseberry pie, it was scrumptious! Sometimes one of my sisters would make cookies or cake; there was no such thing as boxed cake or cookies.

Beneath the window was a table where the prep work took place. Mom would bring out the huge metal bowl in which she mixed the ingredients for four to six loaves of bread. The bread was baked in the cook stove. I believe I have explained in previous articles that the stove was heated with wood and was fired every day, all day long. How she was able to get the temperature right for baking is beyond me. Today we push a button to turn on the stove, then turn a dial to the proper temp, and "presto", it works.

We did not have the luxury of Easter baskets, our Easter eggs were hidden in cereal bowls. We were told we could find them in the dining room or in the pantry. One year, I found mine under an overturned pan on a pantry shelf. We did not get much candy, but the search was fun.

When we went berry picking (gooseberries, raspberries, strawberries), we brought our filled tin pails home to mom. She would use the berries for baking or, sometimes, she used them for jam or jelly. She would make jelly with berries that had been boiled on the stove, after which she poured the contents into an open-weaved bag and hung it under the bottom shelf in the pantry with a small pail beneath it. As the bag hung there, it dripped juice into the pail. When it stopped dripping, she would take the juice, add lots of sugar and some pectin, then boil it on the cookstove to the desired consistency. It was wonderfully delicious on mom's fresh bread.

At Christmas time while we were decorating the house and the Christmas tree, mom would "hide out" in the pantry making Christmas breads and cookies. They were a great treat and we loved every bite. I am sorry to say, I did not inherit that wondrous ability to bake, but she was a pro and it all started in the pantry.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura W. Berglund
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