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Cinnamon rolls top visit to Hudson

When French cooking teacher Laurence Herve arrived last week to teach a class, one of her requests was to learn more about how food is produced in Kansas.

I was only too happy to comply, and with my culinary friends Karyn and Bev in tow, we mapped out an agenda topped by a visit to the Stafford County Flour Mills Co.

Arriving in Hudson a bit early for our tour, we stopped at the Wheatland Cafe for a cup of coffee. The quaint decor spoke of the town's history — a framed flour sack bearing the logo of Hudson Cream Flour, an antique toaster and various memorabilia from an earlier time.

Owner Darrell Bauer took our order, noting that he would have some hot cinnamon rolls coming out of the oven soon if we would like to try them. Of course, we did!

The rolls arrived drenched with a buttery frosting and they were huge — about three inches tall and as wide as a small plate. Laurence told us she had never seen or tasted a cinnamon roll. I knew we were racking up the points with this impressive visit.

Once at the mill, we briefly met Al Brensing, who has been with the company for 73 years; he just celebrated his 93rd birthday and still reports to work every day.

A manager explained the milling process to us as we walked through the lower part of the mill. Much has been computerized since my last visit nearly 10 years ago. Visitors are no longer allowed to climb the multistoried, spiral steps to get a bird's-eye view of the flour-making process due to liability issues.

But we did watch Hudson Cream Flour being bagged, visited a huge warehouse filled with self-rising flour headed for West Virginia, and had a lesson on how flour is tested for baking performance.

This small milling company has an impressive history not only for its quality products, but also for its longevity. Hudson Cream Flour celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2004.

The flour can be found in local supermarkets as well as stores across the United States. Much of it is sold to commercial bakers who prefer it because of its superior performance.

As we left, we each received a gift sack of Hudson Cream Flour. I was not sure Laurence would have room for it in her luggage and offered to take it off her hands, but to no avail. She assured me it was going home to France with her.

Since we enjoyed the cinnamon rolls immensely, Bauer generously shared the recipe. **You will find it on Page 2E.**

Hudson Cream Flour Mill Cinnamon Rolls

1/4cup granulated sugar

1 1/2 cups warm water

1 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons active dry yeast

1/2cup vegetable oil

1/2cup granulated sugar

1 tablespoon salt

1 cup warm milk (95 to 110 degrees Fahrenheit)

7 1/2 cups Hudson Cream Short Patent Flour

Cinnamon-sugar filling:

2 tablespoons butter, room temperature

1 tablespoon milk

3/4cup brown sugar

1/4cup granulated sugar

Cinnamon, to taste

Frosting:

1/4cup butter, softened

1/2teaspoon vanilla

2 1/2 cups powdered sugar

1 tablespoon milk

Mix together 1/4 cup sugar, warm water and yeast in a 2-quart bowl. Let proof for 15 minutes.

In a large mixing bowl combine oil, 1/2cup granulated sugar and salt. Add yeast mixture and milk; mix. Add 2 cups flour and continue mixing with dough hook on electric mixer. Add more flour as needed, using about 7 1/2 cups, and knead until smooth and elastic.

Remove dough from mixer; let rest 10 minutes. Roll into a rectangle 1/4-inch thick. Spread butter over rolled-out portion. Put 1 tablespoon milk in center of this and spread to all the edges. Then sprinkle with brown sugar and granulated sugar over entire area. Sprinkle with cinnamon over all.

Roll and pinch all edges to seal. Cut into 1 to 1 1/2-inch slices and place in a greased baking pan. Cover and let rise until doubled, 1 to 2 hours. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake 20 minutes or until golden and cooked throughout.

If desired, make frosting: Mix the butter, vanilla, powdered sugar and milk until smooth and of spreading consistency. Spread over cooled rolls. Makes 15 rolls.

Adapted from a recipe provided by Wheatland Cafe in Hudson.

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