

In Touch with Prairie Living

March 2000

By Michael M. Miller

Germans from Russia Heritage Collection
North Dakota State University Libraries, Fargo



GERMANS FROM RUSSIA

GRHC

HERITAGE COLLECTION

The Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at the NDSU Libraries in Fargo reaches out to prairie families and former Dakotans. In various ways, it affirms the heritage of the Germans from Russia as an important part of the northern plains culture.

In March, the new 60-minute documentary, "Schmeckfest: Food Traditions of the Germans from Russia" premieres on Prairie Public Television and South Dakota Public Television. The program airs on PPTV on March 5 at 8 pm (CT) and is re-broadcasted on March 15 at 7 pm (CT). South Dakota PTV airs the program on March 7 at 7 pm (CT) with a re-broadcast on March 18 at 4:30 pm (CT).

There will be a "Rugby Premiere" of the foodways documentary on April 7 at 7 pm at the High School Theater, Rugby, ND. One of the featured guests will be Theresa Kuntz Bachmeier (90), Rugby, who is featured in the documentary preparing Cheese Buttons (Kaeseknoepfla) and sharing her memories.

"Schmeckfest" is a documentary showcase of a people and culture shaped not only by the lands in which they settled, but also a strong religious faith passed from one generation to the next. These influences are reflected in recipes, which turned the simplest of ingredients into the grandest of meals.

Starting with the simple ingredients of flour, eggs, milk and butter a bare table in a typical German-Russian household could be transformed into a banquet of amazingly diverse and delicious dishes. From Knoepfla soup to Strudel to Kuchen, these food traditions of the Germans from Russia survived little change over 200 years. However, with German settlers arriving on the frontier landscape of the Russian steppe, they also borrowed Ukrainian, Jewish, Turkish and Russian culinary influences.

"Schmeckfest" preserves these memories with vignettes that feed the soul and warm the heart. Share the festivities of Schmeckfest in Eureka,

SD, experience the famous Knoepfla Soup at Kroll's Kitchens in North Dakota, and savor the hearty Schachlika Supper in Richardton, ND.

Ron Vossler, scriptwriter and narrator for the foodways documentary, shares this message: "Over the course of two centuries, wherever fate has swept them, the Germans from Russia have adapted and endured. They have survived famine, wars, drought, prairie fires, and poverty of frontier life. From the Russian steppe to the grasslands of Argentina, from the American prairie to the forests of Siberia, this ethnic group's resourceful self-sufficiency, particularly in the growing and preparation of food for their large families, remains a rich legacy passed to future generations. In German-Russian life, food was love; and prairie mothers, who left no records of their lives, are remembered daily in the recipes and rituals of food preparation."

For more information about the new video, visit the website pages: library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/tapes/foodvideo.html or <http://www.prairiepublic.org>. Major funding for this production was provided by the North Dakota Humanities Council, North Dakota State University Libraries, and the Members of Prairie Public.

On April 8 from 1-4 pm, the Opening Program and Reception for the GRHC traveling display, "The Kempf Family: Germans from Russia Weavers on the Dakota Prairies" will be held at the Public Library, Harvey, ND. The presenters will be Jay Gage, Curator of the Kempf Family Exhibit, and Michael M. Miller, Germans from Russia Bibliographer. Clothing and textiles will be shown on April 8, donated to GRHC and housed at the Emily P. Reynolds Historic Costume Collection, College of Human Development and Education, NDSU. The exhibit will be featured at the Harvey Public Library from April 8 to November 1, 2000.

For further information about German-Russian heritage, donations to

the collection including family histories, books, tapes and cookbooks available, the Journey to the Homeland Tours to Odessa, Ukraine for June 6-19, 2000 (limited space still available) & May 15-28, 2001, contact Michael M. Miller, NDSU Libraries, PO Box 5599, Fargo, ND 58105-5599 (Tel: 701-231-8416; E-mail: Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu; GRHC website: <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc>).

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