

# In Touch with Prairie Living

April 2013

By Michael M. Miller

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



GERMANS FROM RUSSIA  
**GRHC**  
HERITAGE COLLECTION

When you read this column, I am traveling in southern Brazil from April 6-26, with Prairie Public Television staff for the final filming and interviews in English, German and Portuguese languages for the South American Germans from Russia documentary project. In a future column I will share my experiences in Brazil.

The 7th documentary of the Germans from Russia series of Prairie Public Broadcasting produced in 2012, "At Home in Russia, At Home on the Prairie", in cooperation with the GRHC, has received the "Platinum Best of Show Award" from the Aurora Awards in the Historical Category. This is the highest award for a television documentary presented by the Aurora Awards and is one of twenty-seven to receive this award in 2012 in the USA. More information about the documentary is at <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/order/tapes/kutschurgan.html>.

A marvelous new book, "Ewiger Saatz – Everlasting Yeast: The Food Culture of the Germans from Russia in Emmons County, Logan County and McIntosh County, North Dakota" premieres at the Ashley, ND, 125th Celebration, June 20-23. This book honors the rich and enduring foodways culture of the Germans from Russia who came to south central North Dakota in the last decades of the 19th century. No stranger to migration, these emigrants brought their agricultural, livestock, gardening, preserving and culinary skills with them from Central Europe to South Russia and finally to Dakota Territory and now, through the efforts of the Tri-County Tourism Alliance, their story is preserved in this beautiful book.

The book shares interviews, photographs, memories and recipes about surviving in a time before electricity when food was grown and

eaten locally. This 120-page full color hardcover book contains recipes, handwritten recipe cards, photographs and interviews done with residents of the three counties. The stories and memories are heartwarming and depict a time when everyone worked for food.

"After I was married, then later when I had my family, I didn't think of going into the winter without 500 jars of food that I canned, we canned everything. Because we had no electricity, I have to can the meat and everything," shares Ellen Tuttle, 102-year-old resident of the Strasburg Nursing Home, who is featured in the book.

Sue (Kasemen) Balcom, editor for the book, said, "This project brought me home again. My heart aches for my grandparents. If I had known then, what I know now about these Germans from Russia, I may have lived my life differently. This book is a lasting legacy to my heritage. One of the most rewarding projects I have ever been part of."

In the Foreword, Tom Isern, Professor of History and University Distinguished Professor at NDSU, writes, "No Americans are more fiercely fond of their sausage than the German-Russians, and they pair their sausage with kraut. At the same time, they raised pumpkins in their bashtan (Russian borrowed word for garden) and make them into blachinda (Russian borrowed word for a turnover)."

Carmen Rath-Wald, President of the Tri-County Tourism Alliance, and Logan County Extension Agent, comments, "One of my earliest memories is of standing on a chair and watching my German-Russian grandmother stirring chocolate chip

cookie dough in her chipped green enamel bowl. She died when I was just four years old, but with each chocolate chip cookie I eat, I remember her, and how she made me, her 'Mitzi', feel as we talked in her little kitchen. It is memories like this that, "Ewiger Saatz", recalls for me and those memories connect me to the important past. This connection to heritage and culture is the crux of the book with the food as the vehicle."

Acacia Jonas Stuckle, Emmons County Extension Agent, writes, "It is the food traditions of the Germans from Russia that will keep our heritage alive. Every time I make strudels or knoephla, I am teaching my own children about their culture. They will not learn to speak their ancestor's dialect and they may never learn to polka, but they will eat the foods their ancestors once prepared. This book is an important tribute to the past and an even more important relic for our future."

Volunteers created this book with collection assistance provided by a grant from the State Historical Society of North Dakota. To order the book, contact Carmen Rath-Wald, NDSU Extension Service Logan County, 301 Broadway, Napoleon, ND 58561 – Tel: 701-754-2504; [carmen.rath.wald@ndsu.edu](mailto:carmen.rath.wald@ndsu.edu), or at [www.germanrussiancountry.org](http://www.germanrussiancountry.org) for the order form.

For further information about the Friends of the GRHC, the 20th Journey to the Homeland Tour to Odessa, Ukraine and Stuttgart, Germany (May 15-25, 2014), and donations to the GRHC (such as family histories and photographs), contact Michael M. Miller, NDSU Libraries, PO Box 6050, Dept 2080, Fargo, ND 58108-6050 (Tel: 701-231-8416; Email: [Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu](mailto:Michael.Miller@ndsu.edu); the GRHC website: [www.ndsu.edu/grhc](http://www.ndsu.edu/grhc)).

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