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## What's New

### Cereal? Not today

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Posted: **June 19, 2007**

As you're pouring cornflakes from a box or grabbing an energy bar to start the day, do you ever long for a real breakfast?

You know, the kind of hearty wake-up fare associated with crowing roosters and morning milkings?

You could whip up an omelet or pancakes and sausage in your own urban kitchen.

Or, you could seek an authentic setting for a breakfast menu rooted in the farming lifestyle.

Take a weekend road trip to either a rural café that serves stick-to-your-ribs breakfast, or a bed-and-breakfast on a farm that offers a morning meal so fresh the eggs still may be warm from the nest.

Summer is the time to escape the city and explore Wisconsin's culinary roots.

It may be cooler by the lake, but it's hard to beat fresh country air, rolling green hills and a heaping helping of breakfast in the glow of an uninterrupted sunrise.

At John and Dorothy Priske's Fountain Prairie Inn and Farms near Fall River (north of Madison), which they share with about 300 long-haired Highland beef cattle, Dorothy Priske prides herself on preparing breakfast with fresh, seasonal ingredients, either produced at Fountain Prairie or other farms whose products are sold at the Dane County Farmers Market in Madison.

You may wake up in a restored Victorian bedroom to the smell of the farm's own ham frying in a pan or a coffeecake in the oven, sprinkled with chopped hickory nuts from a neighbor.

Here, the emphasis is on freshness and quality rather than quantity.

### An evolving rhythm

The classic, full-plate farm breakfast still is part of the rhythm of farm living, but it has evolved just as farming has evolved, said Ann Kaiser, editor of Greendale-based Country Woman magazine, which serves 1 million mostly rural readers across the United States and Canada.

Some farm families still start the day with a hearty breakfast, but others opt for homemade granola, instant oatmeal or cornflakes, she said.

"While it is still an important meal, breakfast has lightened up in some farm homes where not as much physical labor is involved in producing the crops and livestock as there had been in the past," said Kaiser, who occasionally accepts invitations from readers to spend a day working on their farms.

On those visits, she has tried everything from working with sheep to machine-picking asparagus and detassling corn.

"From my experiences staying with farm families, I'd say the big, hearty breakfast is no longer the general rule for every day," Kaiser said. "Like the rest of us, they might often have a big breakfast on weekends. Farm families are eating more of a variety, and likely not as much in

the morning as they did a couple of decades ago."

Whether it's daily fare or a rare treat, the farm-style breakfast remains a nostalgic experience, Kaiser said.

### **Shrinking connections**

Many baby boomers in the city grew up with a relative on the farm. But as the rural population has shrunk, so have the connections to growing one's own food or doing farm chores, Kaiser said.

And farmers have followed the dining trends of urban populations, said Edward Lump, president and chief executive officer of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association. "Farmers are dining out more, too."

Anyone who does physical labor - whether it's farming, construction work or another trade - still appreciates a hearty breakfast on a weekday, Lump said.

Some of those folks start their day in a small-town café, which remains a bastion of farm-style breakfasts. One such place is the Koffee Kup on Main St. in Stoughton, south of Madison, which opens at 5 a.m.

Many of the Koffee Kup regulars are farmers and retired farmers seeking an occasional hearty breakfast.

Construction workers also are regulars.

Diners at the Koffee Kup can order breakfast any time of day, including plate-size buttermilk pancakes or waffles, old-fashioned sausage gravy over fresh biscuits, sirloin steak with eggs, hash browns and toast, or an omelet such as the customer favorite Killer Omelet loaded with vegetables, meat and cheese.

### **A place to gather**

Koffee Kup owner Ken Gulseth used to buy eggs fresh from a farm a mile away until the farmer retired a few years ago.

He still buys tomatoes and onions delivered to the back door by local farmers.

Gulseth's parents both grew up on a farm, and he remembers helping with chores at his paternal grandparents' farm.

The Koffee Kup is a social networking spot for farmers, Gulseth said.

"They enjoy coming in here for breakfast, and if they need help with something on the farm, they can usually find someone here."

During the August tobacco harvest (a viable crop in this area), farmers stop in the café after selling and delivering their crop to compare notes on yields and discuss prices, Gulseth said.

"Most of the ones I know, their wives work off the farm," he said.

So if they want a hearty breakfast, they either have to make it themselves or stop by a café. Eighty percent of his customers are repeat customers; two-thirds order breakfast, Gulseth said.

### **Plenty of ingredients**

He figures each week he goes through 2,700 eggs, 125 pounds of sausage (both patties and links), close to 200 pounds of bacon, 100 pounds of hash browns and 20 gallons of pancake batter.

"I believe in making everything big," he said. "Especially breakfast. You listen to your customers and they train you.

"When school's out, I get more kids and bigger breakfasts. If I'm not too busy and they want chocolate chips in their pancakes, I accommodate them."

When the Atkins diet first came out and was all the rage, requests for meat and eggs doubled, while the popularity of toast and potatoes dropped dramatically, Gulseth said.

Among the breakfast regulars one recent morning around 7:30 was a group of firefighters from the firehouse next door.

"I come here for breakfast because my wife's not a morning person," said Scott Wegner, deputy chief of the Stoughton Fire Department, as he dug into a Garbage Omelet. (That's an omelet of three eggs, bacon, ham, sausage, mushrooms, green peppers, onions and tomatoes, Swiss and American cheese and topped with homemade chili for \$5.95.)

### **Dorothy's in the kitchen**

The Koffee Kup has a policy that if firefighters get called out on an emergency before they finish eating, they get a fresh serving "on the house" when they return.

On this day, Wegner was having breakfast with Capt. Don Hanson and assistant chiefs Red Benschop and Dick Kittleson.

Benschop ordered French toast, while the assistant chiefs had Kitchen Omelets (a Denver omelet with ham, green peppers, onion and a choice of cheese).

### **Local produce**

A little later at Fountain Prairie, the Highland beef cattle were enjoying the tall prairie grasses of summer as storm clouds hovered over the farm, and Dorothy was in the kitchen, making her own kind of country breakfast.

The Priskes take at least one cow to a local butcher shop each week to produce their dry-aged beef, which they sell at the farmers market and to high-end restaurants. They also raise Berkshire hogs.

A frittata Dorothy prepared this particular day included Swiss cheese from Bleu Mont Dairy Co. in Blue Mound (they know the cheesemaker), organic eggs from the farmers market, ham from their own hogs, asparagus grown by John's brother, Tom, snipped tarragon and strawberry garnish fresh from Dorothy's garden.

What John and Dorothy serve guests for breakfast may be considered "trendy" gourmet because it incorporates fresh herbs and healthful techniques, such as roasting potatoes instead of frying them. But it also reflects the rural tradition of growing one's own food, as John Priske remembers from growing up on a farm near Lodi.

"The emphasis on our farm was to feed the family," John said. "We had a garden with lots of tomatoes, beans, potatoes, cucumbers and sweet corn. And we raised beef, hogs and chickens. Breakfast was eggs and salt pork. I hate cereal."

### **Where food comes from**

Dorothy grew up on a small dairy farm, drinking milk fresh from the cows.

For city residents, it's easy to forget that food doesn't originate in a grocery store, Dorothy said.

The Priskes encourage their guests to get a good glimpse of the origin of their meals, as well as an overview of their approach to land stewardship.

It's the perfect conversation topic for breakfast on the farm.

To view recipes and photos, go directly to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel website

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=621566>

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