

Cooking – Female Chores, Butter making etc

Well when I was young, the work in the house was all done by women. I never remember my father having to lift a child or change any of us or doing any house work at all. But I suppose I remember right enough a few times when mum was sick, he did make a couple of pans of bread. It was only maybe when she was sick. The role in our house was, mammy baked all the bread that the family ate.

The neighbours came in at night and they got their bread and milk. The butter was all made in the churn. She collected the milk up for a few days and then when it was ready it was put into the big churn and it was a job I did not like. It was put into this big churn and put into the middle of the floor and she would put some hot water out of the kettle into it and you would start to churn, mind you it could last an hour.

Well the men if they came in and what they called that time was called a brash. Maybe mummy would say, “give us a brash” and they would take the staff and pound, the pounding up and down, then that would go on to the milk and butter was separated, then she would let it sit and but we would all nearly, all then get a mug of this lovely butter milk and it was delicious, but nowadays that would be counted maybe as if there was viruses in it. I don’t know, nobody ever suffered any diseases because of it years ago.

But now its pasturised and all that fit for drinking. I remember it was lovely, I would love to get a cup of it now. So then she would take the butter off the churn, then and lift the lid off and scald the whole thing with a kettle of boiling water, wash down the lid. It was all wooden and she had a big wooden dish and scotch hand. That is what she used. She would put it down, she never touched the butter. Now she had the dish in her hand, she had the scoop and she lifted the scoop of butter out and put it into the dish and again she had it all out and she would go on this scotch hand and draining the milk back, moisture then brought it over to the table and stand with cold water and what they call washing the butter.

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Cold water was poured over it and you patted away and that went on until the butter, there was no milk in the butter. Then she took her salt and she salted the butter, it was that type of course salt and then she kept making away at it, into a round and then she had what they call a mould and I remember ours had a big cow on the mould. So she would have hold this in her hand and she would have taken the scotch hand and put the butter on and clap right round it and put it down on a plate and it was a nice ring with the cow on top that would go on 'til she got a few cows with what she had left and then she would make it in to one big piece and just leave it there maybe slice it off.

But in the summer time when there was plenty of milk she would sell her butter, that time and there was a butter market apparently in Dungannon, I never seen it, but I remember hearing it and my father would take her in the cart and he would be going with the family to the market, she would go and bring her butter. The butter was sold in the butter market in Thomas Street, there's a sign up, 'The Butter Market.' She made the bread, she put raisins in and she made treacle and what else did she make? Jam, we had apples. We had an orchard. There was plums and Apples in the season, then she would make jam and that jam would do you for long enough, you wouldn't have to buy much jam. Most of the cooking was all your own produce. Your own potatoes, you dug, your own potatoes and we would have to go out and gather potatoes, they were used for the dinner and for feeding the hens, that time they were fed with potatoes.

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