



# The POWER of Pie

**SERVING UP COMFORT  
AND COMMUNITY  
IN EVERY SLICE**

Price Electric Cooperative  
Director Karen Newbury has  
been baking homemade pies at  
her Kountry Kafe in Fifield for  
more than 28 years.

**W**hat's in a homemade pie? There's the usual ingredients of course, like flour, butter or shortening, a little bit of salt, and some kind of filling, all carefully combined into a mouth-watering treat. But somehow, a homemade pie is so much more than just a delicious sum of individual ingredients.

Maybe it's because of all the time and care it takes to make a pie from scratch. When you bite into a piece of homemade pie, you know you're enjoying something that someone put their heart and soul into preparing.

Or maybe it's because a homemade pie conjures comforting feelings of hearth and home, triggering images of Mom or Grandma rolling out dough in a cozy kitchen or setting a fresh-baked pie on the windowsill to cool.

And maybe it's because homemade pies most often appear at times when people come together, whether it's a daily coffee klatch at a local diner or a holiday meal

served to family and friends.

About the only drawback we can think of when it comes to homemade pie is that today's fast-paced world doesn't leave a lot of time for the meticulous process of baking one. However, that little challenge is easily overcome. Wisconsin's electric co-op country is dotted with locally owned, community-minded cafés and bakeries where pies are made from scratch, with care, often using fresh ingredients that came from a trusted orchard, farm, or garden just down the road. They're the kind of homey places that can make you feel like a welcomed guest at someone's family dinner table.

**Kountry Kafe** One such place is the Kountry Kafe in Fifield, owned and operated by Price Electric Cooperative Director Karen Newbury and her sister Kelly for more than 28 years. Karen oversees the home-

cooked menu at the restaurant and accompanying catering business, preparing much of the food herself. Kountry Kafe serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner, with a rotation of daily specials featuring lots of comfort foods like meatloaf, casseroles, pot pies, and the must-have Friday fish fries. The restaurant is known for its homemade chicken soup, sold by the cup or by the gallon to take home, and also for the homemade pies. Oh, those pies...

Newbury typically bakes pies twice a week, six to 10 pies at a time, for restaurant patrons. Catering events, which occur regularly, can significantly increase the weekly pie output. She makes every kind of pie imaginable, all from scratch, using methods she's perfected over her many years of professional baking.

"To me, it's all about the crust," she said. "I use lard and butter in my crust. Some people just do one or other. And when I make my wash for the crust, I use vinegar. Vinegar, eggs, and water for the wetness. I think the vinegar helps keep it super flaky."

The fillings are just as distinctive as the crust. Newbury bakes all the standard favorites, using local ingredients whenever possible. Raspberries are picked fresh in a neighboring community, blueberries come from a cranberry bog a couple of miles down the road, and fresh rhubarb is contributed freely from neighborhood gardens. But Newbury also combines the classic fillings with unexpected ingredients to create her unique signature pies, such as bourbon blackberry pie and brandy pecan pie.

She was inspired to start putting her own twist on her pies after watching the 2007 movie "Waitress," about a down-on-her-luck waitress and talented pie baker who dreams her way out of her small town and rocky marriage.

"One of the times when she was all upset she made a unicorn pie, or a rainbow pie," Newbury explained. "And I thought, 'Why can't I call my pies different things too?' I made a rainbow pie with sprinkles, and it didn't necessarily sell super great, but people talked about it. It was different. Same with the alcohol pies. They're unique."

### Commitment to Community

Directors and representatives of electric cooperatives throughout the state are well familiar with Newbury's unique pies, which she donates each year to the annual auction benefiting the cooperative's political action committee. Enthusiastic bidding for the pies results in substantial contributions to the cause, and the pies garner rave reviews from the lucky winners.

This kind of community outreach is another distinctive characteristic of Newbury's pie baking. Not only is she a director of her local electric co-op, but she also serves on the board of directors for the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association, the statewide service agency representing Wisconsin's 24 electric cooperatives; and Dairyland Power Cooperative, Price Electric's wholesale power provider. As such, Newbury lives by the cooperative principles. The seventh principle, Concern for Community, is where her pies come into play.

In addition to baking steadily for her restaurant and catering service, Newbury regularly donates pies to local organizations including the ATV club, of which she's a member; area churches; and various sports clubs.

Newbury takes a rhubarb pie with a Dutch crumb topping out of the oven.





Kountry Kafe guests can enjoy a cocktail with their dinner from the restaurant's full bar. The restaurant is a popular meeting spot for local clubs and organizations. Karen's husband, Keith, made the sliding door that separates the back room of the café so it can be closed off for private parties.

The most pies she's ever turned out in a day is 88, made on a single Saturday for a fundraiser for her daughter's nursing program, which was raising money for a trip to Costa Rica.

The catering side of Newbury's business also evolved from her commitment to community. She explained that she got into catering mostly because there was a need for such a service in the area for funerals, weddings, parties, banquets, etc. The catering accounts for a large portion of Kountry Kafe's business; however, the restaurant side hasn't slowed down.

"We seat about 95 people in the café," she pointed out. "So on a Saturday morning we're feeding 95 people in the café, and then we might be doing a wedding for 350 at night, and we're doing a funeral at lunchtime for 150."

That's a lot of cooking for a small crew, especially one that eschews pre-made mixes. Regardless of the workload, Newbury wouldn't serve anything but homemade at her restaurant. She knows that's what keeps her customers coming back.

"I think that's part of the appeal; they know the food's been made from scratch and it's not out of a box," she said.

**Back to Business** The launching of Kountry Kafe all those years ago was a homecoming of sorts for Newbury. She worked at a restaurant when she was in high school and learned to make her famous pie crusts by working alongside an older lady who baked the desserts.

After graduation, Newbury took the postal test and tried out a career as a postal carrier. "I did it for one day. I hated it," she said.

She discovered a restaurant that had been long known in the area as Doug's for sale, and she and her husband, Keith, decided to take a look. They found a building in disrepair, lacking in working kitchen equipment as most had been sold off. But they took a leap of faith, and, together with her sister, bought the business and slowly built it up. Almost three decades later, the restaurant is still going strong, although Newbury looks forward to the day she can ease away from the long hours and spend more time with her family.

For now though, she's got a whole community to feed, and that community only gets bigger as customers return, bringing friends and family along.

"I have so many people that live here, and when they have family



come they'll say, 'Oh, we have to come to the café. You have to have the soup, or we have to have the meatloaf, or we have to have their pie,'" she said.

That pie. Oh, that pie...

—Mary Erickson

*Kountry Kafe is located at N14015 W. Central Ave., Fifeield, WI 54524. It's open Sundays and Mondays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays, open Thursdays 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and open Fridays and Saturdays from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, call 715-762-4946.*