

YOU HAVE TO SIT DOWN TO STIR

Alice Doyle on donuts by Tim Buskey

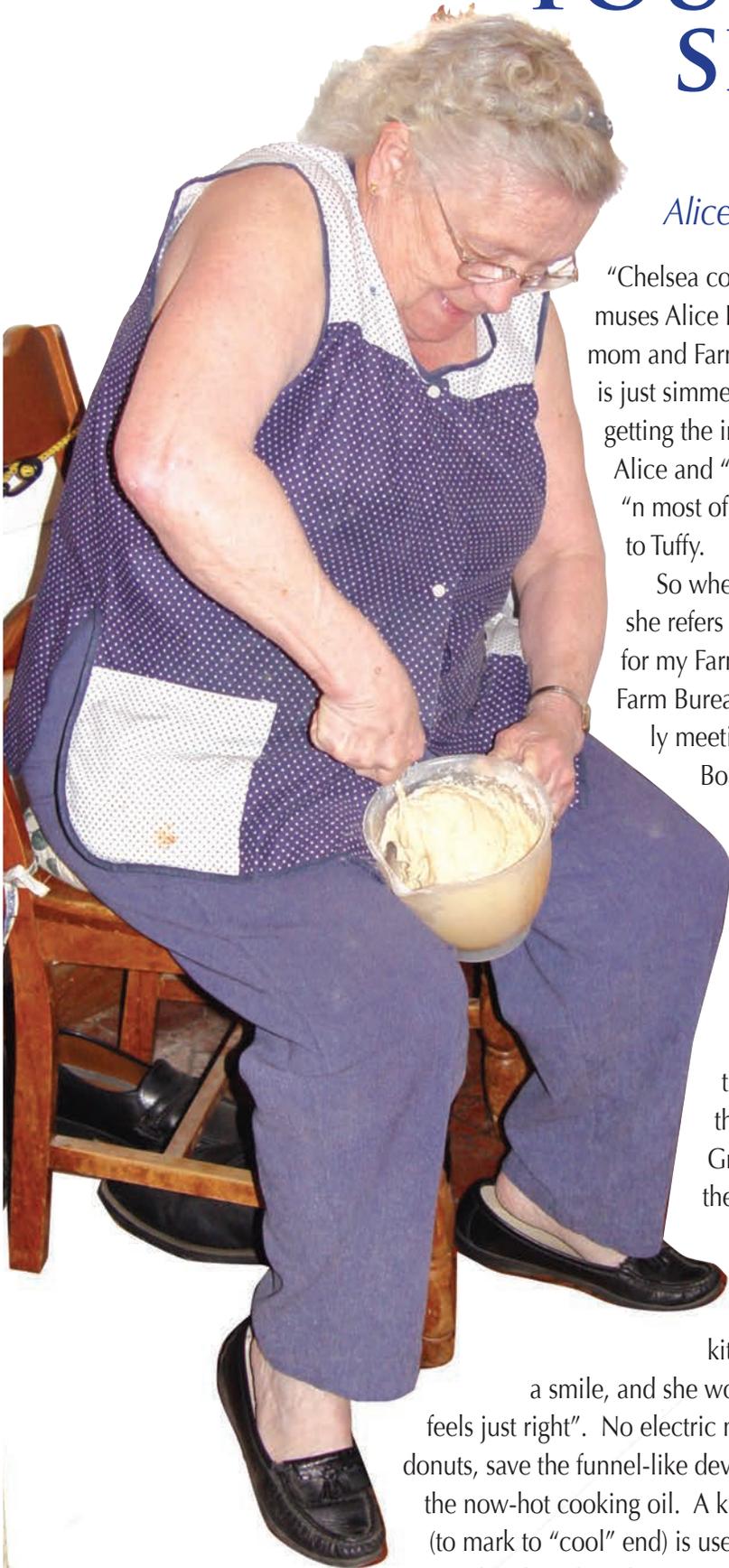
"Chelsea cooks are great, but they say my donuts are the best", muses Alice Doyle, the quintessential Vermont cook, homemaker, mom and Farm Bureau member. The iron kettle full of "cookin fat" is just simmering on the stove as Alice bustles about the kitchen, getting the ingredients ready for another batch of her famous donuts. Alice and "Tuffy" Doyle have been married for fifty-seven years, "n most of that, we've been members of Farm Bureau" according to Tuffy.

So when Alice is asked "who" says her donuts are the best, she refers immediately to "the boys". "I'll be doing this next week for my Farm Bureau boys" she said, referring to the Orange County Farm Bureau Board of Trustees, who would be having their monthly meeting. Alice has been serving as County Secretary for the Board for as long as she can remember, "probably thirty or forty years."

Alice and "Tuffy" Doyle's 40 cow dairy farm is nestled in the hills above Chelsea on a passable, but muddy dirt road that suffers occasionally from frost heaves this time of year. Son Jim now runs the 198 acre farm that was purchased by his parents shortly after they were married. They raised four children on the farm, Theresa, Sandy, Jim and Andy, and now have the favor of five grandchildren, all of which enjoy their Grandparents, and Alice's donuts. When asked about their fifty-seven year marriage, "Tuffy" said, "it worked 'cause I was down to the barn all the time."

Alice dumps a couple of cups of flour into her milk, sugar and egg mixture and then moves to a kitchen chair. "You have to sit down to stir" she says with

a smile, and she works the batter until she can pat it with her hands, "and it feels just right". No electric mixers or other gadgets are used in the making of Alice's donuts, save the funnel-like device with a trigger that dumps the finished dough into the now-hot cooking oil. A knitting needle with a dollup of nail polish on one end (to mark to "cool" end) is used to turn the donuts and retrieve them from the hot oil. One batch makes about two dozen donuts, and, she says, "they come out better if





Upon our visit Alice showed us step by step her donut making process. Sifting the flour, dropping the dough into the hot cooking oil and at right Alice flipping her donuts with a knitting needle.

you just make a single batch – and then if you need more, just make another batch”. According to Alice, Tuffy never cared much for her donuts, until she began making them for large family gatherings, or for “the boys”, or a special Veterans event. “Then he’d come up from the barn and taste all the rejects, and pretty soon a half dozen were gone” smiled Alice, “so much for the donuts”. Alice makes donuts “about once a week” for all kinds of Church groups and charities and the family. At the end of this batch, she scraped the bowl and plopped what she called “a blob” into the hot oil and turned it within seconds, pulling it from the hot fat before it was completely cooked, “for my daughter Theresa; she likes them like this”.

The original recipe for the “Sweet Donuts” comes from a Mrs. Edna Leise of Chelsea, printed in a cookbook compiled (and sold) by the Service Guild of the United Church of Chelsea, Vermont, which sold for a dollar in 1950 at its’ second printing. Alice’s copy of the cookbook, now well used and well worn, sported a foreword by Stanley C. Wilson, former Governor of Vermont (1931-35) who wrote in 1950:

“Chelsea cooks can by their skill prepare a banquet fit for a king, or they can, in an emergency,

produce from odds and ends a meal that will please the palate and satisfy the appetite. A good cook is never at a loss when unexpected guests arrive.”

The recipes in this book are tested and attested as good by some of the cooks of Chelsea. Properly used they will produce food such as people like and which they can eat in reasonable quantities and be happy about it then and thereafter.”

The cookbook, called “Kitchen Kapers” was a fund raising effort of the church in the late forties and fifties. In the early eighties, one of Alice’s favorite recipes from the book appears in the Vermont Farm Bureau Women’s Committee book called, “Vermont’s Best Cooks”. Adapted by Alice, its called “Grammie Ladd’s Raisin Cake” and can be used with a stalk of rhubarb or an apple, and should be served warm with creamy white frosting flavored with rum.

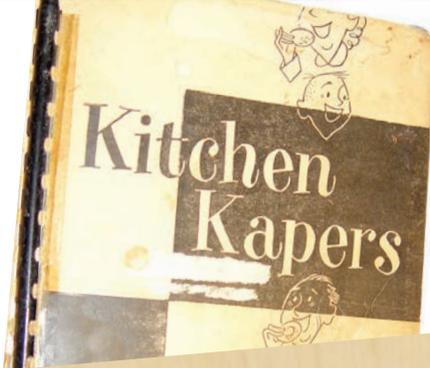
Several kinds of donuts suddenly appear on the kitchen





table, as Alice explains that “these are raised donuts” and “these are sweet donuts”. And then, without flourish, two dozen brown donuts appear, piping hot and ready to eat. “The coffee is right there, and do you want milk?” asks Alice. Always smiling, with a twinkle in her eye, Alice Doyle’s instructions on how to make her famous donuts are peppered with funny sayings and stories about her life on the farm. “And even though we’re retired now, we’re busier than ever, and I just can’t seem to get everything done” mused Alice as she tasted her latest batch of donuts. She closed the interview with, “I get up every morning well-rested and at night I’m re-tired”.

Alice whipping up the batter. The original Kitchen Kapers cookbook. Clip out Alice’s recipe (don’t forget Tuffy) Tuffy is now Alice’s biggest fan.



Alice’s Donuts

- One Cup Milk
- One and a Half to Two Cups of Flour
- One Cup Sugar
- One Teaspoon Salt
- One Egg
- 1 Teaspoon Nutmeg
- One teaspoon Soda
- Two Teaspoons Cream of Tartar

Use just enough flour so the dough can be handled. I never roll it but pat with my hands to the thickness desired. Fry them in hot fat.

