Aunt Katherine’s Cinnamon Pull-Aparts
from the desk (and kitchen) of President Kevin Satterlee

Ingredients:

For the dough:
1 cup scalded milk
2¼ tsp. active dry yeast
4 Tbls. vegetable shortening
3¼ cups flour
2 Tbls. sugar
2 eggs (beaten)
½ tsp. salt

For coating the prepared dough:

In one bowl:
½ cup butter (melted)

In a separate bowl, mix together:
1 cup sugar
4 tsp. cinnamon

Non-stick spray to grease the rising-bowl and the baking pan (I use a traditional bread loaf pan).

Instructions:

First, scald the milk. The pull-aparts will not taste the same without scalding the milk. Scalded milk infuses flavors in the recipe differently than if you do not scald it first. To scald the milk, put it in a saucepan on the stove over medium heat (stirring frequently, but not constantly) until it reaches 170 degrees, or, as I do it, until it starts to bubble around the edges and forms a skin on the top (that is why I do not stir constantly, so I can periodically watch for the bubbles and skin to form). Remove from heat before it goes to a full boil. Then, let it cool to between 90 and 110 degrees. It is important to let it cool. If you add it to the yeast too hot, it will spoil the yeast.

Dissolve the 2¼ tsp. of yeast into the cooled milk. Let it sit until your yeast is activated, about 10 minutes. It takes this long, be patient. Unfortunately yeast does not activate the same in milk as it does in water, so you will not be able to see it happen - just give it 10 minutes.

Cut the 4 Tbls. vegetable shortening into the 3¼ cups flour. Then add the prepared yeast and milk mixture, the 2 Tbls. sugar, 2 eggs (beaten separately first), and the ½ tsp. salt. Mix thoroughly. Knead for about 5 minutes on a very lightly floured surface if by hand, or for 5 minutes if in a mixer with no extra flour needed. The texture should be smooth to the touch when properly kneaded.

Place in a greased bowl (large enough to allow the dough to double), and turn it over several times so the dough gets a light layer of the grease over the entire surface. Cover the bowl with a kitchen towel and place in a warm area. Let it rise until it doubles in size (usually about 2 to 3 hours).

Once doubled, punch the dough down once. Then, grab a piece of dough just smaller than a golf ball and roll it into a ball. Dip the ball into the melted butter, then put it in the sugar/cinnamon mix and roll it around until coated. Next, place the ball into the pan. Repeat with several pieces of dough and continue filling the pan with two to three layers of the dough pieces. Cover the pan with the towel again. Let rise again until they double in size.

(Note: It can also be refrigerated overnight at this point. I often make it to this point the night before and then put it in the fridge to bake the next morning. If so, cover with plastic wrap to make it airtight and then refrigerate overnight. Remove it from the fridge in the morning, take off the plastic wrap and let it sit at room temperature for about an hour before baking.)

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Bake for 35-40 minutes until they are dark brown and it is bubbly on the sides of the pan. Let cool for about 10 minutes and remove from the pan. Flip it upside-down and it should drop out as a single loaf. You may need to use a knife or thin spatula to run along the outer edges where it can be sticky.

I always loved two things that my great aunt Katherine would bake. Her molasses cookies and her cinnamon pull-aparts. And holiday breakfasts are all about Aunt Katherine’s pull-aparts. She would deliver them to us Christmas Eve wrapped in aluminum foil and the shape of the package was unmistakable. It was always so hard to wait until the next morning to eat them. So we usually heated them up while going through our stockings first thing in the morning, before the sun came up. It was a great way to start Christmas off right.