

# *The Joy of Baking*

*Waldorf Curriculum  
Preschool Newsletter*

*September 21, 2005*

# ACTIVITIES

As you well know, spending time with children is always rewarding. It can help you to see the world around you in a whole new way and to value things that you may take for granted or consider perfectly ordinary. On the other hand, when you are entirely responsible for their care, even small children can be intimidating. Just what do you do with them all day? This newsletter is here to help – whether you're a parent, grandparent, babysitter, caregiver, neighbor, or anyone acting as a substitute teacher and spending the day with a preschool-aged child.

Many families also use the weekly newsletter topics as a one week long mini-unit for homeschooling.

The following sections will give some suggested activities for this week's theme as well as methodology and ideas for preparation.

## Opening Verse

The Waldorf method places a strong emphasis on establishing rhythms throughout the day to give a comfortable sense of order and security to a child's life. One of these is to start your day (or your time together) with a short meditation called an opening verse. Choose a place which is clean and orderly; children are deeply sensitive to their environments and are unable to feel calm in the midst of chaos. Lighting a candle while you say the verse is customary, as this helps to establish a reflective atmosphere. Even if you choose not to do light a candle, the opening verse will be a transition for the child into your care. After you declare yourselves to be "ready now for work and learning", you can blow out the candle and begin your day!

Opening Verse:  
In the morning at the sunrise  
When the light of day doth break,  
Children's souls, by angels guided,  
Sleep from rested body shake,  
Ready now for work and learning,  
Happy, steady, and awake.

## Stories

Pretzel

The Duchess Bakes a Cake

The Unbeatable Bread

Pancakes, Pancakes!

The Wiggler

Mr. Angelo

by Margret Rey

by Virginia Kahl

by Lyn Littlefield Hoopes

by Eric Carle

by Lisl Weil

by Marjory Schwalje

## **Pretzels**

Read Pretzel with the child. Make pretzels together and eat them OR make pretzel shapes out of salt dough and bake them for an addition to the child's play kitchen.

## Salt Dough

Note: there are many variations on this simple recipe. Our advice is to experiment until you get exactly what you want.

### **Ingredients**

4 cups flour  
1 cup salt  
1-1/2 cups hot water (from tap)  
2 teaspoons vegetable oil (optional)

Mix the salt and flour together, then gradually add the water until the dough becomes elastic. (Some recipes call for 2 teaspoons of vegetable oil at this point.) If your mixture turns out too sticky, simply add more flour. If it turns out too crumbly, simply add more water. Knead the dough until it's a good consistency—then get out rolling pins, cups, bowls, straws, cookie cutters, plastic utensils, and let the fun begin!

If you want colored dough, mix food coloring, powdered drink mix, or paint into the water before adding it to the dry ingredients. Or you can paint your creations after baking them at 200 degrees. Baking times will vary depending on the size and thickness of the object, but make sure that all of it is hard. If the dough starts to darken before cooking is complete, cover with aluminum foil. Painted keepsakes will need to be sealed on all sides with clear varnish or polyurethane spray.

You can store your salt dough in a sealed container in the refrigerator, but usually not more than a couple of days.

## **Cake**

Read The Duchess Bakes a Cake. Show your child how to proof yeast (that is, to test it and see that it's alive). Add one packet active dry yeast to 1/4 c. warm water (between 110 and 115 degrees F) and stir to dissolve. (The water should feel like a pleasantly warm shower, or about the temperature you'd use for a baby's bottle. If it feels uncomfortably hot, it will probably kill the yeast.) Add one teaspoon of sugar and let the yeast sit for five minutes. If the yeast is foamy and smells like bread, it's active.

Parent Background: Yeast is a living organism – once you give it food (sugar) and water, its metabolism begins to work. The carbon dioxide gas which yeast gives off when metabolizing its food is what causes your baked goods to rise.

For fun, you can also try following a recipe and putting in way too much of one ingredient to see what happens!



One Room Schoolhouse:

With older children, consider some scientific experiments using yeast. A wonderful example of this is The Yeast Beast: <http://www.haverford.edu/educ/knight-booklet/yeastbeast.htm>

## **Bread**

Read The Unbeatable Bread. Bake some bread together! Make sure it is a yeasted bread so that your child gets the entire experience of watching the dough rise and then punching it down. Baking bread is an important part of any Waldorf preschool curriculum and, if possible, you should bake bread with your child once a week on a regular day.

“Wash on Monday,  
Iron on Tuesday,  
Mend on Wednesday,  
Churn on Thursday,  
Clean on Friday,  
Bake on Saturday,  
Rest on Sunday.”

from Little House in the Big Woods

## **Pancakes**

Read Pancakes, Pancakes! together with your child. Make pancakes (or any other breakfast food) with your child and talk about where each ingredient comes from.

In Jack’s case, before he can enjoy his pancake, he must first get flour from the miller, an egg from the black hen, milk from the spotted cow, and butter churned from fresh cream. If possible, take your child on a field trip to a farm to see some of these things take place.

## **Butter**

Read The Wiggler. Make butter: Buy whipping cream (heavy cream – you cannot substitute any other kind) at the store and pour it into a clear pint size jar with a tight fitting lid. Take turns shaking it vigorously until it turns into butter; this will take about 15 minutes. Serve on crackers or make pancakes and serve it on them.

The cream will turn into butter faster if a clean smooth pebble or marble is added to the jar (your “frog”). This also provides an extra incentive for the child as it helps them know they are shaking the jar hard enough when they can hear the marble rattle.

Steps in the Process: First, you can expect to make whipping cream. Keep going – suddenly, the cream will seize and the butter will gather at the top, floating in a pool of fresh buttermilk. The butter should be removed from the jar and placed in a clean container. It will last longer if a small amount of salt is added and worked in.

If you are able to find a child-sized butter churn (standing or table-top model), read Chapter Two of Little House in the Big Woods and then try churning butter with your child. This will require substantially more cream! To pass the time while churning, children often used to recite this traditional chant:

Come, butter, come!  
Come, butter, come!  
(child’s name) standing at the gate  
Waiting for a butter cake.....  
Come, butter, come!

## **A Bakery**

Every child loves the clapping game:

### **Pat-a-Cake, Pat-a-Cake**

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake,  
Baker’s man,  
Bake me a cake  
As fast as you can.  
Pat it and prick it  
And mark it with a B,  
And put it in the oven  
For (child’s name) and me.

Read Mr. Angelo. Visit a bakery and watch the baker at work. Ask why he decided to become a baker, and what he likes about it. Purchase some bakery products and enjoy them together!

If your child especially enjoys the visit to the bakery, consider purchasing the "Storefront Bingo" game from Magic Cabin to play together:

[http://www.magiccabin.com/magiccabin/product.do?section\\_id=1&bc=1004&pgc=701&sv=333343&cmvalue=MCD|1|Toys%20%20Games%20Departments|333343|FEATURES|FP3](http://www.magiccabin.com/magiccabin/product.do?section_id=1&bc=1004&pgc=701&sv=333343&cmvalue=MCD|1|Toys%20%20Games%20Departments|333343|FEATURES|FP3)

### **Closing Verse**

Use this verse to end your time together on a high note, striving to go forth and made the rest of the day a good one. Like the opening verse, lighting a candle is customary and provides a sense of closure. When the candle is blown out, you will go forward feeling positive about the next thing to come your way.

The golden sun so great and bright  
Warms the world with all its might.  
It makes the dark earth green and fair,  
Attends each thing with ceaseless care.  
It shines on blossom, stone, and tree,  
On bird and beast, on you and me.  
So may each deed throughout the day,  
May everything we do and say  
Be bright and strong and true,  
Oh, golden sun, like you!

# OTHER IDEAS

## **Independent Play**

Don't forget the many benefits of unguided imaginative play. You need to stay nearby for safety's sake, if the child is in an unfamiliar environment or you aren't certain what should or should not be childproofed. All children need daily time to play. In the preschool years, play is the WORK of the young child. Prepare an appropriate play space and then stay out of it as much as you can; give the child the simplest and highest quality toys you can find such as large pieces of cloth, blocks, dolls, and materials from nature (such as pinecones, feathers, or shells). Avoid plastic toys. Consider a basin of water and some measuring cups or add some dish detergent and give the child a whisk. The more open-ended a material, the more of the child will be brought forth in playing with it. The more structured a material, the less will be required of the child – and the less he will grow and develop when playing with it. As a simple test, try playing with the toys yourself. If you find you tire of a thing quickly, so will a child!

## **Helping**

Helping around the home is an essential part of any Waldorf curriculum. It is not necessary to put a child in front of the television while you do the dishes or sort the laundry into lights and darks; let the child help you. Even if you have an automatic dishwasher, a child can help by rinsing the dishes before they are loaded. Children love to do work that they know is truly helpful and all young children thrive in situations where they are allowed to imitate an adult. Washing the dog, washing the car, sweeping or dusting, repotting houseplants, feeding the cats, setting and clearing the table... all of these are wonderful activities to do with a preschool-aged child.

## **The Joy of Dishes!**

Especially with a topic like The Joy of Baking, you may be creating a lot of dishes. This is a wonderful opportunity to involve the child in all steps of the baking process: from set up to clean up. Your child will not believe that doing dishes is hard work or something to moan about unless that is what she has been taught. Set a good example by cheerfully doing the dishes together. Even the youngest child can do a few and be proud:

“Every morning there were the dishes to wipe. Mary wiped more of them than Laura because she was bigger, but Laura always wiped carefully her own little cup and plate.”

from [Little House in the Big Woods](#)

# PLANNER

**Activities:** highlight the activities you would like to do

Opening Verse

Stories

- Pretzel by Margret Rey
- The Duchess Bakes a Cake by Virginia Kahl
- The Unbeatable Bread by Lyn Littlefield Hoopes
- Pancakes, Pancakes! by Eric Carle
- The Wiggler by Lisl Weil
- Mr. Angelo by Marjory Schwalje
- Little House in the Big Woods by Laura Ingalls Wilder

Pretzels

- Salt Dough recipe

Cake

Bread

Pancakes

Butter

A Bakery

- Pat-a-Cake, Pat-a-Cake rhyme

Independent Play

Helping

The Joy of Dishes!

Closing Verse



# PLANNER

**Book List:** list the books you will be reading

The Wiggler and Mr. Angelo are out of print and may be hard to find -- feel free to substitute other books you may have on hand which relate to this theme

**Materials:** list all materials required for your chosen activities