

HAND MADE

Melissa K. Norris



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS
EUGENE, OREGON

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked AMP are taken from the Amplified® Bible (AMPC), Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.Lockman.org.

Cover by Rightly Designed

Cover Image © Pinkyone / Shutterstock

Published in association with the literary agency of WordServe Literary Group, Ltd., www.wordserveliterary.com.

Readers are advised to consult with their physicians or other medical practitioner before implementing any of the suggestions contained in this book. This book is not intended to take the place of sound professional medical advice or to treat specific maladies. Links to other sites are provided for information only—they do not constitute endorsements of those other sites. Neither the author nor the publisher assumes any liability for possible adverse consequences as a result of the information contained herein.

All temperatures noted throughout the book are in degrees Fahrenheit.

HAND MADE

Copyright © 2017 Melissa K. Norris

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97402

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

ISBN 978-0-7369-6967-3 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-6968-0 (eBook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Norris, Melissa K., 1981- author.

Title: Hand made : the modern woman's guide to made-from-scratch living /
Melissa K. Norris.

Description: Eugene, Oregon : Harvest House Publishers, 2017. | Includes
bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017014015 (print) | LCCN 2017031510 (ebook) | ISBN
9780736969680 (ebook) | ISBN 9780736969673 (pbk.)

Subjects: LCSH: Home economics. | Country life. | Home—Religious
aspects—Christianity.

Classification: LCC TX147 (ebook) | LCC TX147 .N8248 2017 (print) | DDC
640—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017014015>

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 / BP-JC / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*To my parents,
for teaching me the old ways and
passing down the traditions of past generations.*

*To those who share and
preserve their wisdom for future generations.*

*To my husband,
who lets me know, for better or worse,
how a recipe really tastes.*

*To Julie and Karen,
for opening your friendship, kitchen,
and soap-making skills to me.*

Contents

Come On In	7
1. Bake	9
2. Simmer	57
3. Culture	87
4. Thrive	127
5. Simplify	171
6. Homespun Holidays	193
Recipe Index	247
Notes	253

Come On In

Today's modern world has many things I'm grateful for, but we're also on the cusp of losing something precious. In our drive-through society and "serve it to me ready to go" way of thinking, we further our hurry-up mind-set. We're always in a hurry to do more, but we never seem to reach the place of rest—the respite we're rushing to.

Deep down, we know we're missing something. Our hearts grab onto the promise of a simpler way—a yearning for yesteryear and a reminiscing of a slower-paced time.

In the pages before you, I share the wisdom of people who lived through some of the hardest years the United States ever faced, the Great Depression. But that title is a bit misleading. Like many of our hardships and darkest times, when we reach the other side, with battle scars and healing wounds, we see the snippets of beauty. We discover we learned what is truly important and what we're really capable of. We pare away the unnecessary and the distractions, and we know what is dear to our hearts. Though we'd never have thought it before, we're grateful for the hard times, because without them, we'd never have gained the wisdom.

That is what I'm sharing with you, passed down from my grandparents, my father (whose earliest years and memories are from the Great

Depression), and many other dear friends and family members, that their wisdom may bless you and not be forgotten.

There is something to be gained by creating things by hand beyond just the financial savings and health benefits of cooking and baking real food. It's a kinship with those who have gone before us. A connection with those who passed a special recipe to us, the memories of those we've shared it with, and a promise to those who will share and make it after us. It is my hope that in these pages you will find simplicity, new recipes, and old-fashioned wisdom that still apply to our modern lives.

You'll discover old-fashioned, from-scratch cooking, and recipes so finger-licking good, they'll become your new go-to's. Because I firmly believe food should be enjoyed, that the best recipes don't have to be complicated, and healthy can still taste good!

You'll find a marriage of the old ways and modern methods—recipes and tutorials for growing your own culinary and medicinal herbs and for making homemade soaps and body care items, and strategies for creating a haven in your home amidst our crazily paced lives. The door is flung open, soup is simmering on the stove, a cup of tea is steaming, and the rocking chair with grandma's quilt and I are waiting. Come on in, friend. Come on in.

Bake

The kitchen was the hub of our small home. Clad in her apron, my mother could usually be found inside the kitchen nook at the end of the trailer where I grew up. Tall evergreens stood sentinel at the end of our yard; large branches fringed the outside of the kitchen window. During windstorms, the low-hanging branches would sweep across the tin roof. The kitchen faced north into the forest, just feet beyond the thin glass windows, and not much light made its way inside.

Due to necessity and want, my mother cooked all our meals from scratch. Breakfast was oatmeal, homemade pancakes, biscuits slathered with homemade jam or gravy, or eggs with toast. The cookie jar never stood empty, and after trudging in from the hour-long bus ride home from school, some type of home-baked goodie always awaited me.

Food is my mother's love language. And she speaks it fluently.

Dinner was a family affair, often including friends or extended family members. By evening, the kitchen windows were slick with condensation, evidence of the food simmering on the stovetop and baking in the oven. And also evidence of the not-so-well-insulated glass and walls. If you've ever lived in an older trailer, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

My father worked long hours as a log truck driver. He left before dawn and didn't get home until right before dinner. The evening meal was often the only time I would get to see him during the week.

He'd enter the house, the sharp scents of pine and cedar hitching a ride in with him. "Hope you've got enough," he'd say. "I invited so-and-so for dinner."

Mom would survey the saucepan and skillet on the stove. "I'll bring out an extra can of beans and the peaches from last year." She'd turn to me. "Better get the extra leaf for the table."

Soon every burner on the little stovetop would have a pot simmering. Mason jars would offer up their bounty from last year's harvest and then wait empty in the sink to be washed. The only dishwasher to be found was a pair of hands.

The table leaf was stored where we could grab it easily. Dad had a habit of bringing people home for dinner, especially without telling my mother in advance. She learned to cook on her toes. This always made for interesting evenings and supper conversation.

One night the guests arrived, and Dad invited them straight into the kitchen while Mom finished preparing the meal. Our living room didn't get nearly the spotlight the kitchen did when company came.

"Tom invited us over for mazzards," one of the guests said.

My head whipped back and forth from Dad to Mom.

"She's the finest mazzard cook you'll run across." Dad's blue eyes twinkled.

Mom kept her gaze trained straight on the fry pan in front of her. Her grip tightened ever so slightly on the spatula.

I caught another look at Dad. I set the plates with precision, my focus never wavering lest I give something away.

Dad and the couple sat down, and I sat down too. The wood of the worn chair was smooth beneath my hands as I tucked them under my legs.

The gentleman glanced toward Mom as she turned the meat.

"We'd never heard of mazzards before, but we figure it might be something related to a Mallard duck."

I bit the inside of my cheek to keep my lips from twitching upward.

Mom's shoulders stiffened.

"That's a right fine guess." Dad couldn't contain his humor any longer, and a big grin split his face. "Truth be told, I was pulling your leg.

There's no such thing as mazzards, but my wife is a fine cook, and you're invited to stay for supper."

I searched the man's face. My fingers curled around the lip of my chair.

Surprise flared in his eyes for a moment. Silence spilled across the empty plates. He glanced at his wife. And then a grin emerged. "You sure had me."

Mom's shoulders relaxed. "You shouldn't tell people that," she said. Her cheeks flushed, and I knew it wasn't from the heat of the stove.

I caught Dad's gaze. He winked at me. The laughter I'd been holding in burst out. Our mirth filled the cramped kitchen. The couple turned into family friends, and rarely did a supper with them go by without some mention of Dad's famous mazzards.

That wasn't the last time he asked someone over for mazzards. When a line works, you roll with it. And Dad was always good with teasing.

That old singlewide 1974 Fleetwood trailer still stands. My parents purchased a house at the end of the road we all still live on, moving out of the trailer when I entered high school. It later housed my husband and me while we saved up to purchase our property and first home. Even though the tiny kitchen is still there, it no longer has the same warm glow and light I remember from my childhood. The original yellow sink is worn down to the metal in spots from the years of dishrags and water.

But I'm reminded that just like the kitchen of my childhood, even when something is small and dark, God's love fills it, stretching it to hold all who need to enter and find shelter and sustenance. No matter how little we have, when we invite Him into the situation, Jesus multiplies what we have to meet our needs. He takes a tiny kitchen and makes it a place of refreshment for those who walk through the door. He multiplies the single frying pan of meat to feed unexpected guests. He takes our exasperation at having to serve more people than we have resources for and fills us with His strength.

If you drive by the road we live on, you'll dismiss that old white metal-sided trailer with barely a glance. Or maybe you'll think how nice the property would look with a proper home. We're quick to

overlook the things that aren't polished or up to the normal standards. But Jesus doesn't look at the outside of things. He looks at the heart. Despite the bleakness on the outside, Jesus enters inside, and when His light spills out, it touches the surrounding walls and beckons others into the warmth. Just like a tiny, cramped kitchen with evergreen branches covering the windows.

Lessons in Hospitality

If I were in the middle of preparing supper and my husband waltzed through the door announcing that he'd invited dinner guests who would be here any minute, I don't believe a smile and grace would be my first greeting.

No. My muscles would go into a hyper state and tense together all at the same time. Pulled between trying to tidy up the living room, making sure the bathroom sparkled, coming up with an idea for dessert and more food, and telling him *exactly* how I felt about the situation, I'd look like a dancing chicken. I bet you'd even find a few feathers littering the floor when all was said and done.

While I know my mother wasn't exactly thrilled when my father did this—and he did it on a regular basis—I don't remember ever watching her throw a fit about it. And as a kid, I would not have missed that had it happened.

Our homes reflect who we are. If our first reaction to having someone visit is stress, that's a sure sign something is out of balance. Don't get me wrong—there's nothing wrong with wanting our homes to look nice and tidy. There's also nothing wrong with our houses looking like people live in them. As I write this, there are two stray socks on a chair, crumbs on the counter that need to be wiped up, and we won't even investigate the floor at this point. That's just at first glance in the kitchen.

The out-of-balance part begins in our hearts. If the first thing I'm focused on is the state of my house and what people will think of me when they see it, my pride is shouting. I want my home to be a haven, a place of rest in a frantic world, a place where relationships can be built

and where love spills out of the kitchen. And let me tell you, stressing out about the house and becoming irritated about an unexpected guest doesn't create any of the things I want my home to be.

Martha [overly occupied and too busy] was distracted with much serving; and she came up to Him and said, Lord, is it nothing to You that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me [to lend a hand and do her part along with me]!

But the Lord replied to her by saying, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; there is need of only one or but a few things. Mary has chosen the good portion [that which is to her advantage], which shall not be taken away from her (Luke 10:40-42 AMP).

I've always secretly thought old Mary ought to get up and help her poor sister out. Here Martha is trying to feed no fewer than 13 guests who showed up at her door, without the help of any modern conveniences. Doesn't it make you appreciate your vacuum and dishwasher a tad more?

I'm pretty sure no one remembered how clean Martha's home was that day or even what she served, but every single one of those people remembered how he or she felt. After the last bit of bread was sopped up in the oil, the taste of the meal was forgotten. But sitting at Jesus's feet, listening to His teaching, was an experience they could never forget.

This moment of feeding their souls was interrupted, however, by a frustrated and put-out woman. If Martha was anything like me, she'd probably worked herself into a good state of mad in the kitchen. By the time she made her way to the living room, her sandals slapped the floor in a sharp, wordless retort. Her attitude cut through the air like a January wind. "Don't you care that I'm working, pouring out everything I have left, and my sister hasn't even lifted one finger to help?"

Oh, my friends, how many times have I been there? I've brought the whining pity party not only to my family, but straight to Jesus—just

like Martha. *Lord, why haven't You helped me out here? Don't You care about all the hours I've put in and how tired I am? Couldn't You give me a break here? It wouldn't take very much—You are, after all, the God of all creation. I'm not asking for a whole kingdom or anything.*

I don't think there's anything wrong with asking why, but it's the heart and attitude that accompany those prayers that matter. *Don't You care?* He sent His son to be nailed on a cross for us. Yes, He cares.

He doesn't want us to be tired or exhausted. Jesus wants us to reach out to Him long before we reach that point.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (Matthew 11:28-29).

Just reading those words eases the muscles in my shoulders.

God has already offered me a break, but I'm too stubborn to see it. (I'm not far off from those stiff-necked Israelites sometimes.) God's grace is our break, and it's available to us every day. So often I clamor for His grace but then neglect to extend it to others.

Hospitality starts in the heart and flows out in our deeds.

There are many nights when I'm in the kitchen cleaning up supper and preparing food for the following day. The clock ticks toward 8:30, and I realize I've hardly sat down since the morning. My day starts at 5:30 a.m. with writing and work on my podcast, blog, and website. Then I get the kids up and off to school, have my morning devotions, exercise, take care of the farm animals and garden, make breakfast, and then drive to my day job.

By the time evening rolls around, my feet ache and I long for the comfort of my recliner. The last thing I want to do is finish making lunches for everyone for the next day. Why am I the only one who makes lunches?

And right there Martha and I become best friends again.

Now for starters, I'm not saying that people in your household and family shouldn't help. I'm not saying you have to be super woman and all of this falls on your shoulders and you'd better be able to bear it,

sister. No. Please, don't misunderstand me. If you're truly overwhelmed and believe you don't have any help, I think you should sit down with the members of your family and come up with a plan. Maybe your children aren't so young anymore, and it is time for them to start making lunches or helping with some routine chores. The important part is when you go to speak with them, *you don't do it with a Martha attitude*. Make sure you're approaching them and the situation with grace.

When I'm tired and I still have work to do, I've learned to go to the Lord in prayer. Instead of saying, "I don't know how I can get all of this done, I'm exhausted, and I can't do even one more thing," I remember these words from Scripture:

I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint (Jeremiah 31:25).

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters (Colossians 3:23).

The motive behind the deed is the most important part. When I shift my focus off myself and onto God, reminding myself of His desires, my strength is renewed. This meal I'm making will provide strength and nourishment for the people I love, and preparing it at home saves us money. (Frugality is something that definitely keeps me motivated.) Next, I begin to list all the good things that person does for me. By the time I'm done preparing that meal or whatever task I'm doing, I'm refreshed and ready to go wrap them up in a big hug instead of yelling at them for not helping.

Feed the soul first and there will be enough to fill everything else.

Spelt Flour

Bread is a good filler item, and there's a reason it's been a staple in man's diet for thousands of years. If you're wanting a healthier flour, you may want to go the route I did.

Spelt is an ancient wheat grain mentioned by name in the Bible. It works as a great whole wheat pastry flour. Spelt has a higher protein count and higher water solubility than regular wheat flour, and it also contains all nine amino acids and is much easier to digest. Its gluten content isn't as high as regular all-purpose flour, so when using it in a standard recipe, use $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups spelt flour for every cup of regular flour as a general guide, or use the same amount of flour but cut the liquid by a quarter: for example, 1 cup of milk would be $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of milk if using spelt flour.

I grind my own spelt flour, but you can usually find it preground in the health food sections of grocery stores, specialty baking areas, or online.

Chocolate Chip Cookies

Is there any more beloved cookie than chocolate chip? I always bake half of the cookies the day I make this dough and the rest gets formed into a log for the freezer to be transformed into the perfect cookie. This recipe has been adapted from my mom's original recipe because we don't use shortening at our house.

$1\frac{1}{3}$ cups softened butter

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup brown sugar

$1\frac{3}{4}$ cup white sugar

2 eggs

2 tsp. vanilla

3 cups flour, sifted (for chewier flat cookies, use $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour)

1 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. salt (if using salted butter, make it closer to ½ teaspoon)

2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 375°. Cream together the butter and sugars for 3 to 5 minutes. (I've tried using coconut oil, but if you use coconut oil only do 1 cup, as it tends to spread out and make flat cookies.) Mix in the vanilla and eggs. In another bowl, stir together the flour, soda, and salt. Combine the dry ingredients with the wet and stir in the chocolate chips.

Drop by the rounded tablespoonful onto a cookie sheet. (A small ice cream scoop helps keep cookies uniform.) Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, until the cookies are just barely browned on the top, and then remove from the oven. Let the cookies sit on the sheet for 5 minutes before transferring to a cool rack. This helps create soft, melt-in-your-mouth cookies.

Flaky Buttermilk Biscuits

One of the most versatile bread items—and one of the tastiest—is the humble biscuit. This little darling can be ready to go, from start to finish, in 20 minutes. If you've ever had biscuits in the can from the store, once you try this recipe, you'll never want to use store-bought again. This biscuit recipe makes the best, flakiest, melt-in-your-mouth biscuits you'll ever eat. I'm serious—you may well want to double the recipe. This recipe is courtesy of my mother, considered one of the best bakers in our valley, as my older brother proclaims and I concur.

If you don't have buttermilk, do *not* substitute regular milk. Instead, add 1 tablespoon lemon juice to the milk and let sit for a few minutes until it's curdled. You can also learn how to make real buttermilk at home on page 116. As to the flour, you can try a mixture of part whole wheat and all-purpose flour, but you get the most flakiness from straight all-purpose. (Shhh, don't tell my grain mill!)

2 cups all-purpose flour
1½ tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. salt
2 tsp. honey
½ cup cold butter, cut into small pieces
¾ to 1 cup buttermilk

Preheat oven to 400°. In a large bowl, mix together the dry ingredients. Using a pastry cutter (or two forks, but you'll be making these enough to get yourself a pastry cutter), cut in the butter until it turns the flour into little pea-sized clumps. Add the honey and buttermilk and stir until just combined. Start with ¾ cup of buttermilk and only add the last ¼ cup if needed to hold the dough together.

Dump the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and fold it together a few times with your hands. Pat out into a 1-inch thick circle. The key to flaky biscuits is to not overhandle the dough. You want the butter to melt as it bakes (this is where the wonderful flaky layers comes from) and not from the heat of our hands by overkneading or overmixing.

This is important: I used to cut out my biscuits with an upside-down glass. Don't do it. If you want a mile-high biscuit (and you do), use a metal biscuit cutter. This cuts through the dough cleanly, allowing it to rise easily. A glass cup actually pinches the sides of the dough closed, making a short, squat biscuit.

Place your biscuits in a cast-iron skillet or on a baking sheet and bake for 15 to 18 minutes, until the tops turn a luscious golden brown.

Biscuit dough freezes really well. I often make a double batch and freeze the second sheet of unbaked biscuits. After an hour or so (or whenever you remember), transfer the biscuits to a sealable freezer container and store in the freezer for up to six months. Take out and bake as normal whenever the urge (or unexpected company) hits you. You may need to increase baking time by 2 minutes.