

# What is the Chugach Way?

“Kindy Bread” by Amy Sexton

The smell of Kindy bread baking in the oven is a unique and welcome experience for Chugach Optional Families. It is a sort of "rite of passage," to be lucky enough to bring home one of those fresh, small loaves. How many of the middle and upper group families have smelled that bread and recalled when they were a Kindy? Have you ever wondered where this tradition which creates warmth and community came from?



The Kindy bread phenomena started out small. When Jean Ward came to Chugach 24 years ago, she brought in the idea of bread-making, having been inspired by traditions from the Waldorf educational philosophy. "I saw first-hand in a friend's Waldorf classroom how there was a coming together when they made bread: as the ingredients blended and then expanded so did the spirit of community between the children." That tradition has grown into something truly unique.

Besides being "fun" - there are many skills the children are learning when they make bread. While it's true, there is that wonderful aroma that instills peaceful feelings in many of us, there are actually educational reasons behind why they make bread. Baking has the potential to weave together many of the important aspects of life, to strengthen their practical skills and abilities and harness their boundless energy. In addition, math and science skills are created through creative, purposeful work.

Teachers and parents mentor the children's bread making. Like many important jobs, baking bread has its designated day of the week. Participating in activities like baking bread enables the children to learn to do their fair share and to help others. They can be seen sprinkling in yeast with a song, adding flour, taking turns stirring, and kneading their own little loaves. Children are eager participate in this work because they love to measure, knead and even clean up.

The great thing about bread-making, is the children are able to start a project and see the results and ultimately they are able to share their bounty with others. Cloth runners designed by former kindergartners grace the classrooms each bread day, providing a common space for sharing in the simple but powerful act of breaking bread with friends, passing jelly and practicing table manners.

The experience of baking and eating Kindy bread is enjoyed throughout the year - and then it's reserved for a new group of incoming youngsters who need to figure out how to be a family group - how to learn and grow together. So the next time you are walking by and enjoying the scent of Kindy bread - think of all of the wisdom and tradition behind it - and then maybe make your own loaf with your child!