

# OTTUMWA COURIER



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*Swiss  
Delight*

FOOD, PAGE B1

## Suzanne Tanner loves to bake and share her favorite Zopf Swiss bread

BY PAT SHAVER  
COURIER STAFF WRITER

OTTUMWA — American bread is too fluffy for Suzanne Tanner.

She moved to Ottumwa from Switzerland in 2008 and has been making traditional Swiss bread, called zopf, for friends and family ever since.

Zopf, she said, is about as common in Switzerland as pancakes are in the United States. It is known as a traditional Swiss breakfast bread, and is usually eaten with butter or jam. Tanner describes it as “crunchy on the outside and soft on the inside.” However, the bread is difficult to find in America.

“Every Swiss knows about this bread,” she said. “I grew up with zopf.”

Tanner bakes about two pounds of the bread a week, but she doesn’t plan to produce the bread commercially. She said she doesn’t want the pressure of having to make 100 loaves a week.

She grew up in a German-speaking part of Switzerland, completed the equivalent of high school and became a waitress. A few years later she worked her way into hotel administration jobs and also worked in marketing and public relations.

Tanner said one of the biggest differences between Switzerland and America is access to health insurance. In Switzerland, everyone has health insurance. Here, Tanner doesn’t have any.

Also, she said, the food in America isn’t as healthy as it is in Switzerland. And people walk places more often than they drive in Europe.

“The very, very cold winter and a constant wind blowing in your face,” is another major difference between Switzerland and Ottumwa, Tanner said.

The streets in the United States are must broader, the cars are bigger, and there are more traffic signs than in Switzerland, she said.

“In Switzerland everything is so close and much smaller,” she said.

Despite the less healthy food and lack of health insurance, Tanner said she was surprised with how friendly most Americans are.

“Americans are very nice. You are so friendly with your neighbors,” she said. “It’s just not the same in Switzerland.”

And she loves to bake bread for her friends and neighbors.

She starts with a mixture of warm milk, sugar and yeast. In another bowl, she mixes flour and salt and slowly mixes in melted butter and milk to make the dough.

After letting the dough rise for 20 minutes, she cuts it into four equal parts and then cuts those in half to roll ropes to braid.

When she’s baking zopf, she doesn’t want to be sloppy about it. It has to be just right.

“It’s like a business card from my country,” she said. “I’ve learned a lot from making bread. The quality of your work has to be excellent.”

She carefully measures and times the process and doesn’t take any shortcuts.

“I don’t want to risk it. It’s good to have patience and learn patience,” she said.

### A BRIEF HISTORY

Zopf is a typical Swiss Sunday treat that has been known in Switzerland since at least the middle of the 15th century. Some people think it owes its origins to a custom where widows cut off a braid of their hair and buried it with their husbands. As time went on, they buried a loaf in the same shape instead of their hair.