

With a colorful family history, Roxanna had plenty of stories to tell the Lands. One involved her great-uncle Howard's cinnamon rolls, which we are told he baked nearly every morning. One day Butch Cassidy showed up at his door, hoping Howard could repair his revolver. He couldn't, but he offered him his freshly baked cinnamon rolls, and that seemed to lift the outlaw's spirits.

"He ordered back east for confectioners' sugar, 50 pounds at a time," we learn, "and he added melted butter and a portion of strongbrew coffee and a dried vanilla bean ground fine with mortar and pestle." Roxanna teaches Swede how to make the rolls.

"Peace Like a River" author Lief Enger shared his mother's cinnamon roll recipe with the authors of "The Book Club Cook Book" by Judy Gelman and Vicki Levy Krupp (Tarcher/Penguin, 2004, 2012).

Here is that recipe (we added vanilla to match the passage in the book):

Mrs. Enger's Cinnamon Rolls

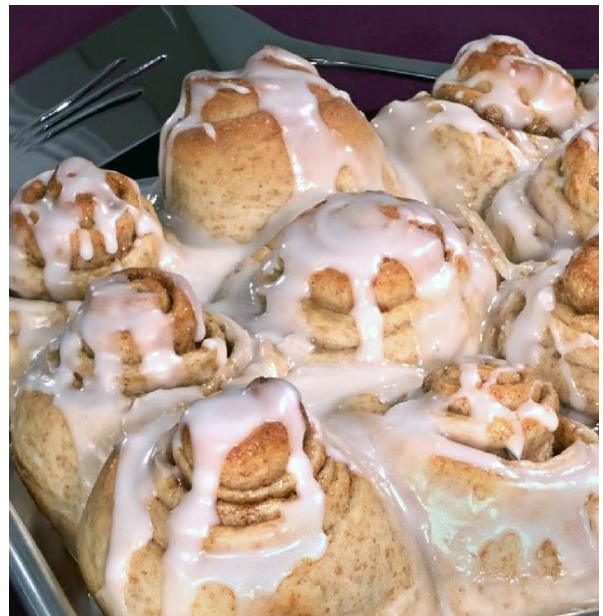
Makes 3 to 4 dozen 3-inch rolls

Rolls:

2 cups water
¾ cup honey
½ cup vegetable oil or lard
1 scant tablespoon dry yeast
½ cup warm water
6 tablespoons ground cinnamon
2 cups granulated sugar
2 eggs, beaten
2 teaspoons salt
8 cups flour
Melted butter

Frosting:

Coffee
2 cups powdered sugar
2 tablespoons butter, melted
Vanilla bean scrapings (or vanilla bean paste) to taste



Make the rolls: Bring to a boil the 2 cups water, the honey and oil or lard. Allow to cool.

Dissolve yeast in the ½ cup warm water, with a dab of honey to hasten proofing. In bowl, mix together cinnamon and granulated sugar.

Place cooled water-honey-oil mixture in a large mixing bowl and add eggs and salt. Add yeast mixture. Stir in flour; you want a fairly stiff dough, so you may need to adjust the amount.

Turn dough out onto a floured surface and knead well 15 to 20 minutes, until smooth and elastic. Shape into a ball, place in a greased bowl, cover and set aside to rise at least 3 hours.

Punch dough down and knead a few minutes. Roll out dough thin—it will make 2 or 3 large flats. Brush the top surface with melted butter, then lay on a heavy coat of cinnamon-sugar. Roll flats up into tight cylinders and pinch the edges together to seal. Slice cylinders into 3 to 4 dozen rolls, place on jellyroll pans, cover and allow to rise overnight.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake rolls 18 to 20 minutes.

To make the coffee frosting: While the first batch bakes, set up a pot of strong coffee. Have a cup, then splash ½ to ¾ cup in a bowl containing powdered sugar and melted butter. Stir until smooth and not too thin. Drizzle over warm cinnamon rolls, or spread it on with a knife.