

BONITA/COLI



MARC BEAUDIN/News-Press

ROLLING IN DOUGH: Mickey Miller, left, a Koreshan State Historic Site ranger, sorts baked hermit cookies while, from left, Joyce Ratcliff, Paula Stillworth and Hazel Purcell make more cookies from scratch Tuesday at the Estero park.

Baking cookies for ghosts

Ghost Walk returns to Koreshan park

By ANDREA STETSON
News-Press staff writer

ESTERO — The warm aroma of freshly baked cookies filled the small, one-room wooden building and wafted out into the cool Estero air each time the door opened.

Inside, three volunteers spent hour after hour rolling dough, placing it on cookie sheets and baking it in one tiny, white oven.

But these women weren't baking a dozen or two for their grandchildren. Instead, their sticky, dough-covered fingers were rolling almost 600 hermit cookies for the Koreshan State Historic Site Ghost Walk on Friday and Saturday.

"The hard part is mixing that dough," Paula Stiltzworth said. "This is the easy part."

Despite the enticing aroma, the women said they resisted even a taste of the dough.

"Mickey is standing over us to make sure we don't touch the batter," Joyce Ratliff said.

Ranger Mickey Miller brought Stiltzworth, Ratliff and Hazel Purcell some chocolate-chip cookies and also compiled a bag of nonperfect hermit cookies to nibble on instead.

The hermit cookies, filled with coconut, crushed nuts, raisins and oatmeal, were a traditional Koreshan recipe. They will be distributed to visitors on the Ghost Walk.

The biannual Ghost Walk takes visitors back in time to witness various scenes from the Koreshan settlement.

IF YOU GO	
<p>■ WHAT: Ghost Walks at Koreshan State Historic Site in Estero</p>	<p>■ COST: \$5 donation requested; proceeds go toward preservation of historic buildings in the settlement</p>
<p>■ WHEN: 7, 7:15 and 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday</p>	<p>■ INFO: Call 992-0311 for information or reservations</p>
<p>■ WHERE: Corkscrew Road, just off U.S. 41</p>	

COOKIE RECIPE	
<p>Want a taste of Koreshan life? Try this recipe for hermit cookies, which were a popular treat at the settlement:</p> <p>HERMIT COOKIES</p> <p>1 cup butter 1 cup sugar 1 cup brown sugar 2 eggs 2 teaspoons vanilla 2 cups plain flour 1 teaspoon baking powder 1 teaspoon salt</p>	<p>2 cups oatmeal 1 cup coconut 1 cup raisins 1 cup chopped walnuts 2 tablespoons molasses</p> <p>Cream butter, sugar, eggs and vanilla. Sift flour, salt and baking powder; then add to creamed mixture. Stir in oatmeal, coconut, nuts and raisins. Bake at 350 degrees for 10-12 minutes. Yield: 6 dozen cookies.</p>

In the Art Hall, people will see a skit on teen-agers practicing their music. In the Founders Hall, Koresh, the settlement leader, is filled in on Koreshan news after a long journey. At Bamboo Landing, children learn about farming on Mound Key. There's also a skit on pioneer fishing and boat repair, a long-time Koreshan settler, baking bread in the bakery, treating the ill with herbs and the Koreshan governing council.

Back in the kitchen, when the women finished rolling the dough,

they had to patiently wait for room in an oven that can handle but two small cookie sheets at a time. Once all the cookies were done, they were hidden and locked up until Friday.

That's because two dozen cookies disappeared before last year's Ghost Walk, and Miller said ghosts didn't steal them. The cookie bandit never was apprehended.

"This time they will be hidden so no one will get them until the Ghost Walk," Miller said.

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