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FEATHERSTONE POTTERY THE ART OF WOOD-FIRED STONEWARE AND CERAMICS

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All Rise for Ferman’s Bread

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Tom and Clare Larkin look forward to their 2009 Fall Show and Sale as much as longtime customers anticipate their annual trek to Featherstone Pottery. “We have had people come time and time again for years,” explained potter Tom Larkin. “We get to know them, so it’s fun to see and talk to them.”

He’ll have several new items at this year’s show, which will be from **10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Nov. 2**1 and **11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Nov. 22** at his rural Red Wing studio.

Larkin and his brother Jeff started crafting pottery on their Uncle Ferman’s Featherstone Township farm more than two decades ago. They’ve been holding a fall show since around 2000.

Jeff Larkin initially fell in love with pottery as an art form and studied it at the University of Minnesota and in England. Back home, he taught those skills to his younger brother, Tom. They renovated an old hen house into a studio and showroom and built a 30-foot pottery kiln on the family farm. Visitors can check out the four-chambered wood-fired “climbing kiln” while at the studio for the fall show. Typically, Tom Larkin said, they see 300 to 400 people, maybe more. “It is a fun event,” he said.

The show will spotlight the new forms on which Tom Larkin been concentrating the past couple of years – including bread bakers in which to make Uncle Ferman’s Featherstone Farm French Bread. Freshly baked loaves of the bread will be served at the fall show, Larkin noted, along with butter, cheeses and an olive tapanade.

Visitors also will be offered desserts and coffee, cider and wine. The bread recipe, by the way, can be found on the Web site www.featherstonepottery.com .

Also featured this year will be Larkin’s pedestal cake stands and mugs. “I’ve been trying to improve my mug collection,” he said. “I’ve had one for years. Now I’ve come up with another

shape.”

Plates are another current focus, he added. “They’re hard to do in a wood-fired kiln” because they are flat and thin. “They’re temperamental, and will crack and warp.” Larkin also will have his familiar bowls. His hand-thrown work is known for marrying function and beauty. One challenge, he said, is creating pieces that are neither monotonous nor too busy.

“I’m constantly working on developing new glazes,” Larkin added. They can give a piece more depth, he explained. But since he’s only firing once a year now, there aren’t a lot of opportunities to experiment. Featherstone Pottery used to have two annual firings, but Larkin said he’s found a way to stack them so more will fit in the kiln. It can handle 500 glazed pieces, he said, and 500 pieces in the bisque chamber that he’s made in the previous months. Bisque pieces “turn into like a flower pot consistency,” Larkin said. They sit over winter, about six months, in the kiln before he glazes them. The 500 glazed pieces, which were fired in September, will be for sale next weekend along with some carryover stock. Jeff Larkin, who no longer is making pottery, continues to work with his brother on the firing and the show, plus he provides a valuable critique, Tom Larkin said.

To find Featherstone Pottery, take County Road 1/Bench Street off Highway 61 in Red Wing and travel 5.5 miles. Turn left onto 210th Avenue at the Featherstone Town Hall, and continue for .8 of a mile to the third farm on the left.

Or just follow the scent of Uncle Ferman’s bread baking.



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