Lorado Taft's famous cedar tree, featured on our logo and laying majestically in front of the dining hall, is truly an impressive icon. But it is not the tree that has made Lorado Taft Field Campus legendary; rather, it is the cinnamon rolls.

“Oh my goodness, those cinnamon rolls put me over the edge every time,” I hear a visiting teacher remark in passing today. I have to agree. Fifteen months into my time at Taft, I have done the math, and I have consumed 4,692 cinnamon rolls. That’s enough rolls to stretch from the chimney to south field!

Bobbie is a frequent and experienced cinnamon roll baker. “People love them and talk about them. That’s what we’re known for.” She notes that the roll is a “Taft trademark.”

More of a trademark than the cedar tree? Perhaps. The cinnamon roll, taken from an old Betty Crocker cookbook, has been a buttery standard of the Taft kitchen since well before the cedar tree took up its gnarled residence in front of the dining hall. They will surely be baking long after the tree has been taken in by decomposers. Decomposers who, I might add, would rather be eating cinnamon rolls.

(Continued on page 3)
The first is that they are all very common plants and animals that we think of as some of the most basic and widespread of North American species. The second thing they share is that these are all actually introduced species to North America – not one of these is native to our continent! Hard to believe, right? It’s true though – all of these species have been introduced to North America from Europe, Africa, or Asia. Since then they have expanded and prospered.

We don’t think of them as invasive species because most of these were introduced decades or centuries ago and have expanded to the point where they live pretty much everywhere on the continent that they can survive. Most of their impacts on the flora and fauna of this country happened before people were even aware of the effects that invasive species can have on an ecosystem.

In addition, many non-native species were introduced intentionally for food production. Honeybees were brought over for cultivation and for honey production. Dandelions were brought over as a food crop. That’s right – every part of the dandelion is edible, though I wouldn’t advise munching on the ones in your lawn – who knows what pesticides, fertilizers, or other chemicals could coat the leaves (not to mention the possible contaminants if you have a pet dog!). Trout were a great food source and are still stocked in many bodies of water across the U.S.

The problem with this spread of species outside their normal range is that these species can become “invasive” and out-compete the local species. This is generally due to the fact that predator and prey species are often very closely linked, and if you transplant a specimen into a new area it suddenly has no natural predators to keep it in check. This leads to unchecked growth and allows the exotic species to out-compete native species, driving them to extinction in some cases.

Change in nature is constantly occurring, and species spread wherever they can survive (though humans have expedited this process by transplanting species to locations that they couldn’t normally reach). The next time you step out into your yard and see a picturesque scene of bees visiting fluffy yellow dandelions as sparrows and starlings swoop overhead, keep in mind that what we view as the natural world around us is only the latest version. What is “natural” now is markedly different than it was decades, centuries, or millennia ago, and what is natural for further generations will be something we can’t predict. The important thing is for us to observe and enjoy the world around us and do what we can to avoid artificially imposing change on the natural world.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_introduced_species#United_States_and_Canada
Taft Trademark: Cinnamon Rolls

(Continued from page 1)

The kitchen staff make them fresh every time, three times a week, and sometimes up to 180 at a time. They are a chronic temptation for the Taft staff, who have the option of eating them with acute regularity.

“We have them regularly, and keep wanting them,” says three-year veteran Heidi.

“They require a lot of self control,” says Gael, and the staff nod in consent with mouths full of chewy goodness. Based on a recent survey, 84% of Taft staff members don’t want to buy the new pants necessary to accommodate a daily cinnamon roll diet.

Josh reports, “Before I came here, I wore the same pant size I did since I was 16. When I came here, I went up a pant size.” Yet, he nods, dreamy eyed, when I ask, “Is it worth it?”

Jared has come to a place of acceptance. “I feel as if I'm getting wider as a result,” he observes, “And I'm okay with that. It’s more of me to love.” Jared reaches for the cinnamon rolls as he says this, pulling a succulent, unwinding roll off the serving dish and onto an anticipatory plate. “They've also helped my beard grow,” he adds, happily chewing.

Most of us try to only take half a roll. It’s better for you if you eat the two halves separately. Amy has a different idea. “I like to eat the whole thing,” she professes.

Nurse Teresa has been here since '98. She tries not to eat a whole roll, but enjoys a bite here and there. As the nurse, she sets a good example for moderation among the staff as we deal with this frequent and inarguable temptation.

The staff aren't the only ones struggling with moderation. In her thirteen years at Taft, Melanie has seen it all. “Sometimes the children eat too much of the cinnamon rolls, and they puke,” she remarks.

The Taft staff spend a lot of time generating descriptions for the size of the cinnamon rolls. “Big as a goat,” quotes Tom. “As big as your head,” reports Heidi. And from Vicki: “As large as a floppy disc from the '80s.” Jake claims he's seen cinnamon rolls three times the size, and is promptly thrown out of the dining hall for his irreverence.

Kitchen master Kurt is keeping it real. “The quality of them isn't that they come from a fancy recipe,” he notes, “It’s that they're made fresh and from scratch.”

“Just don't skimp on the butter,” says Lori.

“Preach it, sister,” says I.
Maple Syrup

Maple syruping has a long tradition in the history of North America. From Native Americans to early settlers to today, maple syrup means more than just a stack of pancakes.

The sugar season was a time of celebration for the Native Peoples of the North, as it often marked the beginning of spring. They would make a gash in the bark of a maple tree with an axe or tomahawk, put a hollow wooden spile in the gash, and when the daytime temperatures reached over 30 degrees, sap would drip out of the gash. It was then collected in birch bark containers called mukuks and placed in a trough of heated stones to boil the water off. Once the buds of the trees reach the size of a squirrel’s ear, tapping should stop or the sap will be very bitter. One family could process around 600 pounds of sugar. *Sisibaskwatokan* is the Ojibwe word for a maple sugarbush, or a collection of maples in a forest that can be tapped (Sperling WI Natural Resources, 2010). Trees can be tapped throughout the course of their long lives without harm; each tap will be healed by the next year.

Though technology has changed the look of maple sugaring, the process remains much the same today. Metal containers or plastic bags are used to collect sap, or blue piping routes sap to a central collection area, making the forest look like a blue spider’s web. Operations can have just a few trees to over 30,000 taps per grove, with each tree having up to three taps (Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers). 70 to 80% of the world’s maple syrup comes from Quebec. Vermont produces around 40% of the United States maple syrup, followed by New York at 18% and Maine at 14% (USDA, Jun 2013).

If you would like to introduce your students or your family to the wonders of the maple tree, check out these activities and places. In the Chicagoland area, educational demonstrations of maple sugaring are located in forest preserves like Kline Creek Farm in West Chicago and Fullersburg Woods in Oak Brook beginning mid-February, and Ryerson Conservation Area in Riverwoods beginning in March. For a sticky sweet treat try making Jack Wax or Sugar on Snow! Boil some maple syrup until it is thick (soft ball stage on a candy thermometer). Then find an area of clean fresh snow, or put some in a pan and dribble the maple syrup in ribbons on top.

### Maple Syrup Production in USA

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Maple Syrup

A sap run is the sweet goodbye of winter: It is the fruit of the equal marriage of the sun and frost.

Maple Syrup

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Zero Ort!

Congratulations to the following schools for having ZERO ORT during a meal at Taft!

- **ZERO ORT for Multiple Meals**
  - Glenbard North (4)
  - Mt. Carmel (3)
  - Earlville (2)

- Beaufort
- Galena
- Orangeville
- Westview

- Dieterich
- Benjamin
- Chicago City
- Seth Paine

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