

Longs for Old Fashioned Country Cured Ham Which Are Hard to Find

By VICTOR MEEKINS
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Those to whom the old fashioned country-cured ham was a delightful thing, highly prized, have been sharing more disappointment from year to year, until they have about given up hoping to find one. Those farmers who do persist in curing this fine kind of meat apparently save it for themselves.

It used to be in mid-December and continuing through January, that upon a ride through the countryside, one might see hog carcasses at every other farm at least. Of early morning, the roadside would reveal many gleaming white carcasses. Hog-killing time a few years ago meant a gathering of neighbors, many of whom made no charge for their services. Hog killing time was a festive occasion and womenfolks shared in it too. The farmer usually shared his meat with those who came to help him.

The country weeklies carried many advertisements of local merchants reminding the farmers of the availability of hog killing supplies. Salt and pots and pans and knives, and sausage stuffers and meat grinders, lard tins, pork barrels, etc. You don't see so many of these ads now.

Go out through the country from farm to farm and try to buy one of those glorious old country hams. Chances are the farmer is eating Smithfield ham, or one of the less flavorful varieties of meats from Chicago or St. Louis, carried by any corner grocery. Yet we are producing more hogs than ever, and farmers who used to keep six or eight hogs for their own use, now markets hundreds of them each year.

Where have the hogs gone? It's just another example of living in a world that has changed. Hog growers have gone into quantity production. Markets have been opened in convenient areas. Motor trucks make it possible for all farmers to carry their meat on the hoof quickly to market. Back in hog killing days on the farm there used to be periods when even the mule couldn't get out to a dependable road. Farmers then had to have meat of some kind at home. Now they can go buy fresh pork and sausage of their neighborhood grocer any day in the year. The actual need for a hog killing season has passed. The hogs from the farm go to market all through the year. If the farmer wants to keep some of his own meat, the slaughter houses will prepare it for him cheaper than it used to cost when part of the help was furnished free by the neighbors.

In other days up and down this coastland of ours, hog killing time had its counterpart in various forms. There were long, cold winters ahead, and the resourceful and wise old people prepared for those strenuous days. It was a case of survival, for there were no "almost-unlimited" credit facilities. Cash really didn't count for there were no stores where one might buy today's conveniences. Here is what was done to insure plenty in winter, by the old folks who were not farmers, but had only small gardens of greens, and perhaps a few sweet potatoes.

Cattle, hogs and sheep roamed wild on the beaches. The owners took advantage of free range. Through the autumn months they salted up barrels of fat and nourishing drumfish, mullets and spots. Sometimes they salted beef, and even barrels of wild-geese and ducks which were soaked out the same as the fish or the beef and turned into tasty meals.

Flour was unknown, but they took their salt fish across the sounds and up the river to the big farming areas where there was plenty of grain to be gotten in trade. For not even the farmers in the land of plenty across the water, used, or needed ample cash in those days.

Men along the coastland with

their wiry beach ponies, spent many a long summer and winter day, carting up driftwood and wreckage from the strand to build a woodpile to last them through the winter. And the boys and men of the family couldn't run off in those days wasting away their time, burning gasoline that wasn't there and loafing in shops that didn't exist. They had to keep in form, fighting that woodpile with an axe in order to keep warm through the long nights.

Out of necessity in those days there developed a fine and wholesome custom that made people happier and made one love his fellowman the better, and sometimes his fellow-woman. Families short on fuel would gather for the evening in the home of one more fortunate and together they would share the warmth while they talked of the topics of the day, the doings of those who were not there; they shared their mutual problems, described to each other in detail their various ailments, and divided their old fashioned remedies as might be needed. Romances blossomed from the opportunities thus afforded the young people; families began early and were large; folks grew old before their time and passed on while people today less burdened from long toil are enjoying life at longer age.

No one wants those conditions now, having lived amidst the comfort of today's plenty and today's

Sweet Potato Production Is Subject of Talks

Winton.—Howard Garris, plant disease specialist, and Henry Covington, sweet potato specialist, gave illustrated talks to 50 Hertford County farmers Wednesday on sweet potatoes.

Sweet potatoes were suggested as a crop that can be planted to acres lost to allotment crops and still maintain the farm income.

It was stated there had been more demand so far for seed stock than last year and that with the law of supply and demand governing, the outlook is for the farmers to receive \$2 to \$2.25 a bushel for the crop this year.

At 100 bushels per acre, the men said, net cost, including depreciation of equipment and interest on investment, would run \$1.86 per bushel to get the potatoes to market. By increasing the yield to 180 bushels per acre the net cost could be lowered to \$1.25 a bushel.

Mr. Covington said he had seen 300 to 513 bushels per acre yield and had heard of 700-bushel yields.

conveniences. But those who have experienced the pleasanter sides of earlier days miss the joys and benefits of hog-killing time in the country, and the friendliness, the fellowship and helpfulness arising out of firesides shared with the only persons capable of being one's best friend—good neighbors who live nearby.

Cotton Insects Destroy One Bale Of Every Seven

Despite new insecticides and improved control methods, cotton growers are little better than holding their own against insect pests, according to K. P. Ewing, who is in charge of cotton insect research for the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Wing believes real and necessary progress against these cotton enemies can come only through expanded research.

Pointing out that 10 years ago, it was estimated that cotton insects were destroying one in every seven bales of cotton produced. This loss estimate is still one bale in seven.

He does not think these figures correctly reflect the research advances and growers' application of the new findings during the decade. However the latest estimate does point to the need for the development of better meth-

ods of cotton insect control. Explaining the apparent lack of control progress, the researcher says that each year, as knowledge of cotton insects increases, there is better understanding of their potential for damage. As a result, cotton damage estimates have progressed from "conservative" to more nearly-true estimates.

In addition, cotton continues to improve. Each year, plants are more lush, more attractive to insects that respond to this stimulus by developing larger, more destructive populations.

Finally, he says, "No insect pest has been totally eradicated from the cotton fields of this country and new ones are being discovered nearly every year."

Stepped-up research can answer this increasingly troublesome insect problem, in Ewing's opinion.

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