

When Daddy Killed Hogs  
From the book  
“Recipes and Memories From the Heart”  
By  
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1998

HOG KILLING DAY

Now that had to be a cold day. You needed a fresh norther, a cold norther, it had to be clear, dry weather. Daddy would take a shovel and go out and dig a hole and make it to where he could lay a 50 gallon barrel about halfway standing up. He would fill that with boiling hot water and he and another man, it took two, of course, would get the hog in there. First they would take the team, or a horse, and hook on to that hog and bring it to where they wanted to work it, and lay it on some frames off of a wagon, so it wouldn't get in the dirt or anything.

They would slide that hog into this barrel, and kind of slosh it around and turn it around and then they would jerk it out of there and cool it a little bit. Then they would shove it back in there, it was quite a job. If you left it in there too long, it would cook the skin and no way you could scrape the hair off of it, because it was cooked in there. Of course, they had to have sharp knives to shave that hair off of those hogs. And then they had to get a block and tackle and take some poles and a singletree and make a frame to hang the hog up. This would be done that way in West Texas where there were not many trees, down here in Comanche County you could use a block and tackle and a singletree and then hang the hog on a strong tree limb.

But that was a fun day. The hog had to hang up there and chill real good and then they would cut it up, cut the hams and shoulders and the bacon and everything. By that time it was time to think about having lunch. We always had fried liver on that day and sometimes Mother would fix brains and eggs that we all loved. Daddy always took the bladder, cleaned it up good and tied a string around it like a balloon and gave it to us to play with.

I am thinking about Daddy with his hog killing and preparing the hams and shoulders and bacon, curing them. I'm trying to remember how he did those things. Most of the time he would use a dry cure mix. I don't have the exact recipe that he used, but here is the one that Mary Smith's mother used for curing her meat and it looks about like what Daddy used.

SUGAR CURE FOR MEAT

To 100 pounds of meat:      2 Tablespoons of saltpeter  
   2 ounces of red pepper  
   3pounds of brown sugar  
   5 pounds of salt

Mix well and rub on meat.

These had to hang several days in good cold weather. One thing, this would help to get the moisture out of them. But if it turned off too warm^ then you had to get them wrapped up and sealed up in paper in a hurry.

I do know that one time Daddy did his hams and shoulders in a different way. It seems like Daddy's brother, Uncle Joe Cox, had done his like this and Daddy tried it. He got the big galvanized watering trough or something like that from Uncle Joe, and it was my job to get it cleaned up good. It was pretty deep and they laid it on its side for me to be able to reach inside good. Anyway, Daddy rubbed his hams and shoulders good with the meat cure, and they had a thick slurry made up of lots of brown sugar, red pepper and saltpeter and maybe other things. They put water to cover the meat in the big trough, and put in a lot of the brown sugar mixture, I remember it smelled so good. They put the meat in the trough, with enough water to cover it so it would be covered good with the brown sugar stuff. They covered this with a white sheet and tied it on good and tight. It was left overnight and maybe longer, then the meat was taken out and hung up so that it would drip the moisture out of it and cure, then it would be ready to wrap with paper and seal up.

But I know we didn't do a lot of shopping like people do now but we saved our paper. The stores had paper on a big roll, white paper on a big roll in the store and if you bought a pair of overalls or something, they wrapped it with that white paper and tied it with a white string. And we folded that paper and saved it for whatever we might need it for and before hog killing time we really had saved up a lot. And the string, of course, we rolled that in a ball to have to use when we needed something because you didn't buy things like that. We didn't go to town and buy a lot of things, we didn't have brown paper bags.

But whenever you got ready to put the paper on the hams, we would make a paste out of flour, water, and lots of red pepper. I don't remember if we put anything else in that. But we pasted that up real good all around those pieces of meat, and there wasn't any kind of bug or anything interested in eating thru that red pepper. But that would keep and keep and that was so good, we thought, back then.

The next day, after we killed hogs, we made sausage. Mama had a long table and Daddy would cut the meat up and we would grind it up and cut and grind and work and no telling how many pounds of sausage we would fix up at one time. It would cost a fortune to buy that much sausage now.

When Daddy seasoned his sausage, we didn't measure anything. With the big long table piled high with meat, we would put in some seasoning, black pepper, salt and sage; then we mixed it up good and then we'd take a little skillet and cook a sausage patty on the stove and taste it. If it didn't taste right like we wanted it to, then we would add whatever we thought it needed, mix it good and fry another patty to see how it was. That was a job, and that is the way Daddy did it. I really did enjoy getting all of that ready and having all of that sausage ready to hang up. We had lots of cold winters then and didn't have any problem keeping it.

After I was old enough, I would make the sacks for the sausage, out of flour sacks, sugar sacks or whatever we had saved back in those days. Usually we made the sausage sacks probably for 3 pounds of meat, sometimes smaller. But we ate a lot of sausage. When I sewed up the sack, I didn't turn it, I left the raw edge outside because you didn't want the threads to get in the meat. Once you got that sack filled and tied and everything, you laid it down on the table and you would take your hands and rub it real good, get that fat on the sack to seal it up good. Then we would tie the sausage sack with the string that we had saved, and they would be ready to hang in the smoke house. Oh, that fresh sausage was good, and that would keep a long time. Of course, eventually, it would get seasoned out and kind of dry, I didn't really like it then but it was still good to eat. We were happy to have it, because that is the only way you could have fresh sausage, back then.

And of course there was always that cooking out the lard. Daddy always had fat hogs, they had had plenty to eat, and you didn't want all that fat on your meat; your hams, shoulders and bacon. So daddy would trim all of the fat off of that meat, and also on the bits and pieces that went into the sausage. That was trimmings and small pieces of meat, and Daddy didn't want too much fat in his sausage. So all of this fat was saved to cook down into lard. It was put in a big pot on the stove, and you didn't want too much fire going. And you couldn't have it too hot or it would burn the meat. And there was such a danger of getting that grease on fire and burning down the house. When the fat was cooking down, there would be little bits and pieces of rind and meat come to the top. That would be the cracklings. Mama didn't save too many of them, Daddy liked them in his corn pone, but most of the time, she would save them for making lye soap.