

Homestead Notes

Pat Erway, Editor



Mrs. Ben Shenk . . .

She Makes "From Scratch" Pie Baking Look Easy

To market! To market! Yes, it's to two markets every Friday for Mr. and Mrs. Ben S. Shenk of Washington Boro RD1. Ben tends Third Street Market, Columbia and Mrs. Shenk (Pauline) tends the New Eastern Market at the York County Shopping Center, York. The Columbia market opens at 9 a. m. and is open till around 4 p. m. The York market is open from 2 to 10 p. m.

The Shenks sell more at the Columbia market than they do at York, although sales at the Columbia market have dwindled since they open in the mornings instead of the afternoons. This is because housewives who work away from home find fewer things to buy then and they are not as fresh as when the market opened later. There are 30-some butchers, lots of baked goods, flowers, a few gifts stands, three eating stands and a lot of parking space at the New Eastern Market in York.

Ben, the son of Clayton R. and the late Mrs. Shenk, has been tending the Columbia market for 28 years. His mother helped him quite a few years. She baked cakes, dressed chickens, made cup cheese, egg cheese, butter and noodles and he also sold their eggs. Pauline has helped for 10 years but the past six years has been tending her stand at the York market. Their son Dennis helps her at her stand at the holiday markets and sometimes goes to the Columbia market instead of Ben. Ben's sister-in-law helps at the Columbia market stand.

Shenks still sell brown eggs produced on Clayton Shenk's farm from their market stands. They sell from 120 to 125 dozen a week at York and about the same at Columbia. They sell hundreds of their homemade pies. They sell geraniums, vegetable plants and potted blooming tulips and hyacinths in the spring and tomatoes and sweet corn in the summer.

Probably their most phenomenal enterprise is their pie baking. Mrs. Shenk says "The way I got started—I always loved to bake and whenever I'd visit a sick friend I'd take them a pie. A friend suggested baking for market. So I decided I'd try it. The first week I baked eight pies, the second week 15 and so on. When I got to 42 or 44 I said, that's it no more." She says her husband laughs at that now because they bake right now on the average of 300 to 350 pies a week and this is the lowest time of the year. In the fall they make 700 to 720 pies a week for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

The outstanding part of it is Mrs. Shenk makes all the pie dough by hand. It takes a lot of good planning and she has

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By
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definite jobs for every day of the week. She bakes and freezes pie shells for meringue pies ahead of time. She makes crusts for custard pies ahead of time and stacks them in the refrigerator. She also makes filling for meringue and fruit pies a day ahead. Then on Thursday afternoon she fills the pies, makes the meringue and bakes.

Thursday's Ben helps by putting the filling in the pies, tends the ovens and stacks the pies on racks. They pack six pies to a tray. They have two large gas ovens that each hold 14 pies at a time. When they have their busiest season they also use ovens of their two electric ranges.

Ben and Dennis load the panel trucks Friday mornings. To the average pie baker the quantities of ingredients sound fantastic. Every week Mrs. Shenk buys one-and-a-half bushels of apples for pies. She uses four quarts of her home canned peaches because she prefers them. They raise long-neck pumpkins and take them to Shenk Cheese Company of New Danville to be sieved. Last year, being a poor growing season, they had to buy some pumpkins.

They trade their wheat for flour at a local mill and use from 75 to 80 pounds of sugar a week now but double that in the fall. She buys lard from a butcher in Mount Joy and uses about a 50-pound-can a week. Shenks used to

pick their own cherries at Herr's orchard and freeze them. Mrs. Shenk also used to can apricots for pies. She now buys apricots, blueberries and unsweetened cherries by the gallon can.

What kind of pies do Shenks sell at market? Apple, cherry, blueberry, peach, apricot, shoofly, raisin, lemon sponge, coconut custard, egg custard, lemon meringue, coconut cream, apple crumb, cherry crumb, peach crumb and pumpkin and mince meat in season.

Mrs. Shenk bakes most delicious pies. Her meringue is perfect. She bakes her meringue at 375 degrees. She thinks some people have trouble with their meringue because they use too much sugar.

The only weeks Shenks miss market is one week in November when Ben goes hunting and one week in the summer when they go camping for a week or 10 days.

Their line of baked products has changed somewhat from time to time due to other farm operations and change of market hours. Mrs. Shenk used to make 20 to 25 dozen raised doughnuts a week. She started to make them at 3:30 a. m. and had them ready for going to the afternoon market. She hasn't made them for market since Columbia market started in the morning. She baked the doughnuts for six years. Until two years ago they sold sugar and molasses cookies at Christmas time. Two years ago they made 5,000 dozen cookies.

Shenks have a greenhouse where they start rooted geranium cuttings in February. They also start vegetable plants and have them and the geraniums ready for spring market. They grow about 5,000 geraniums of several shades of red, pink and ivy geraniums of different colors which they sell in hanging baskets. They raise about 40,000



Mrs. Ben S. Shenk, Washington Boro RD1, bakes pies by the hundreds every week. Here is an angel food cake with strawberry icing, four finished pies, and a few of the 180 crusts she just finished making.

tomato plants a year. They sell a lot to growers at Washington Boro and other wholesale buyers or sell the others at market. They sell some potted tomatoes at market. They also grow potted tulips and hyacinths and sell at market. They used to retail a lot from the greenhouse but now just wholesale or take to market.

Shenks grow tomatoes and grow some staked tomatoes for market. They also grow sweet corn for market. They didn't grow the sweet corn last year due to the poor growing season.

Mrs. Shenk is a daughter of Amos and the late Mrs. Groff of Charlestown Road, Lancaster RD2. Groffs have had a herd of 40 Holstein cows. Pauline said she got her muscles for rolling pie dough from milking, working out in the fields and doing just about anything on the farm at home when she was a girl.

Ben worked for his father on his 47 acre farm. He bought the 43 acre farm next to his parents' farm on Anchor Road nine years ago and farms the two farms together. They raise corn, hay and wheat besides the crops for market. They also keep Sex-link laying hens on his father's farm.

Three years ago Shenks started raising veal calves. They have a buyer who goes to different auctions to buy calves. They buy only Holstein bull calves. They keep three different age groups and put in 322 calves at one time. They keep them 14 weeks and they average 300 pounds or more when they sell them. Every five weeks some go out, then they clean and sterilize the barn and put little ones in again. They rotate three calf batns. A lot of them go to a kosher market, mostly in New Jersey. Victory Beef buys them. They are trucked to the slaughter house.

They raise the calves on slats. They flush the pens out every morning and evening and have a railroad tank car to catch the rinsings which is put on their land when the weather conditions are favorable. They have ventilating fans in the stables. The men do all their own veterinary work.

Shenks have three children. Donna, 22, graduated from Penn Manor High School and Messiah College at Grantham. She teaches Home Economics for the sixth, seventh and eighth grades at Swift Junior High School in the Solanco District. This is her first year teaching but she loves it. She teaches sewing, cooking and child care. Right now she is teaching the sixth grade boys. She was also a hockey coach last fall. One of her main interests is sewing. She makes most of her own clothing and some of her mother's. She used to do all the cleaning at home and made coffee cakes for market when she was in elementary school.

Dennis, 18, also attended Penn Manor High School. He likes farming and takes pride in his car. He not only helps load the trucks for market and tends the market stalls when necessary but helps with all the farm and greenhouse operations. He is very good with the calves. He also helps with the garden and lawn. Dennis has loads of friends. He plays basketball one night a week with the Youth For Christ group. He enjoys hunting in the mountains.

Dale is 12 years old and in seventh grade at Marticville Middle School. He, like Dennis, helps with the greenhouse, the calves and other farm work and the garden and lawn. One of his loves is his motorbike and he enjoys putting models together.

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Mrs. Shenk keeps the farm records. A few of Ben's hunting trophies add to the decor of his den.