



J. Myron Stoltzfus shows off the old-fashioned sweet bologna that won the grand champion award in national competition. The original recipe dates back three generations and has helped Stoltzfus to grow and remain strong in the meat industry.

Old-Fashioned Sweet Bologna Brings Fame To Stoltzfus Meats

LOU ANN GOOD
Lancaster Farming Staff
INTERCOURSE (Lancaster Co.) — Those who drive along Route 772 in Intercourse often get a whiff of smoking meat. The aroma that floats over the Herford steer perched on top of Stoltzfus Meats, Inc., comes from the company's prize-winning sweet bologna.

For three generations, Stoltzfus Meats have been making their old-fashioned sweet bologna the same way. This year, for the first time, the company entered the bologna in national competition. It swept the grand championship out of hundreds of entries at the American Cured Meat Championships held in Kansas City, Mo.

In addition, Stoltzfus's ring bologna, developed about 10 years ago, took the reserve championship.

"We've been going to the national conventions for years," said J. Myron Stoltzfus, "but this was the first time that we entered anything."

The American Association of Meat Processors is the nation's largest trade organization representing small businessmen in the meat/food industry. Twelve judges from different states judged entries on the basis of aroma, flavor, eye appeal, shape, and texture.

Stoltzfus's Meats was started by Myron's dad, Amos, in the 1950s.

"He went to market during the depression years," Stoltzfus said. "In the beginning, he butchered only enough meat to take to market."

Today, Stoltzfus Meats has a store, restaurant, butcher shop, and smokehouses located on the original property. But the backbone of their business remains the farmers' markets.

"We think farmers' markets are our niche," Stoltzfus said. "People come to Lancaster County to taste our good food, so it stands to reason that when we take what is good out of Lancaster County into other states that they love it."

Much of Stoltzfus's Meats are sold by other standholders who buy it wholesale for markets in New York, Maryland, and Delaware.

Stoltzfus Meats slaughters about 100 hogs and 10 steers weekly. They raise their own hogs on a Berks County farm and purchase steers from local farmers.

Stoltzfus and his brother, Ken, who run the businesses are proud that they offer the finest meats.

"If you don't start with something good, you can't end up with good, wholesome products," Stoltzfus said.

From the beginning, Stoltzfus Meats used good raw lean meat for their bologna, ring bologna, sausage, scrapple, and other meats.

"We don't promote our products as low-fat, but we are looking into doing it in the future," Stoltzfus said. "Preliminary tests show the meat is high in protein and lower in fat, but we need to find out exactly how much lower."

The company's secret spices and flavorings are top of the line. Hickory, oak, and cherry woods are used for that old-fashioned smoked flavor.

Although smokehouses from Germany (a steel and block structure with temperature control and timers) are used for ring bologna, the sweet bologna is still smoked the old-fashioned way with the heat and smoke controlled manually.

"We think that is what gives bologna its unique flavor. You need a denser smoke that gives a good, rich, but not burnt flavor," Stoltzfus said. "Although we are working on it, we haven't been able to duplicate that flavor in automatically controlled smokehouses."

The company smokes about 600 pounds of sweet balonga weekly and 1,500 pounds of ring balonga.

"We don't make a lot of different projects," Stoltzfus said. "But what we do, we do well. We might cost more, but you get what you pay for."

Stoltzfus has two brothers and two sisters who either work or have worked in the family business. "We started when we were young, but when you work on concrete floors and are in and out of the cooler, it takes its toll. We all have some trouble with arthritis," he said.

While many butcher shops have gone out of business, as many as a 3.3 decrease last year, Stoltzfus Meats have shown steady growth. They became USDA approved in 1972. They increased the slaughter floor, the main processing area, offices, store, and restaurant.

"Many businesses go out because it is difficult to maintain government standards. The stringent regulations are often not worth the money it takes to change things so they go out of business," Stoltzfus said.

"When you're in the meat business, you got to enjoy it," said Stoltzfus. "And I do. I've been eating our meats since I was born, and I never get tired of them. I eat as many bologna sandwiches as the next fellow. I even enjoy tasting competitors' meats."

The restaurant, opened in 1968, caters to the tourist trade. It is open May 1 through November 1. Family style meals are served using Stoltzfus's meats. One of Myron's sister manages the restaurant since her parents retired three years ago.

The retail store is opened Thursday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Friday, from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Saturday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call (717) 768-7166.



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