

Go Whole Hog At Lehman's Pig Pickin's

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff

MOUNT JOY (Lancaster Co.)

— If you haven't participated in one of Harold Lehman's "Pig Pickin's," you don't know what it means to go "whole hog."

Lehman's "Pig Pickin's" is when whole pigs are roasted and people use tongs to help themselves to the pork.

The meat is drenched in Lehman's "secret ingredient sauce," which according to Lehman's fans, can't be duplicated for its mouth-watering flavor. The tender, succulent pork entices people to pig out during "Pig Pickin's," which are quite popular in Virginia.

Recently, Lehman roasted 11 pigs for the Kraybill Mennonite School Benefit Auction in Mount Joy. Although Lehman generally purchased top hogs that weigh 220 pounds live weight and dress out at 175 pounds for his catered Pig Pickin's, the school pig roast was a bit different because White Oak Mills donated the 11 hogs and other school patrons provided baked potatoes, baked beans, rolls and cake to accompany it. Since Lehman has a \$3800 chopper, he made the coleslaw for the event.

Although Lehman lives in Virginia, this is the third year he roasted hogs for the Mount Joy school, which some of his relatives attend.

It is Lehman's 12th year in the business of pig roasting that has expanded to include chicken, beef, seafood feasts, and full-meal catering services.

Lehman grew up on a dairy farm in Chesapeake, Va., where it is a 25-year family tradition to roast a pig for a family gathering every Thanksgiving season.

About 12 years ago, friends started asking Lehman and his wife Sally to roast a pig for them on special occasions.

Lehman, who is employed as an aircraft emergency repair investigator, now has a barbecue business that keeps him and his family busy roasting every weekend from May through November.

Last Friday, while Lehman was at Mount Joy roasting pigs in nine cookers, his wife was supervising a pig roast with three cookers in their home state. Lehman had to rush home to help with two pig roasts slated for Saturday.

The Lehmans incorporated their business eight years ago when they bought a license, insurance, and 12

cookers. The children Ron, 23; Ray, 27; and Cindy, 16, also help in the family business.

A popular entree for wedding receptions is 80-pound beef sides roasted, which Lehman and his assistants, dressed in white suits and hats, carve for guests.

For the past nine years the Lehmans also cater the Virginia Billfish Tournament and the Tide water Amateur that draws crowds of 800 plus people. These dinners, called Steamship Rounds, include an all-you-can-eat seafood feast of oysters, scallops wrapped in bacon, shrimp, trout, and flounder.

A typical catered meal in addition to the roasted meat includes cole slaw, red skin potato salad, baked beans, rolls, fresh fruit salad, and iced tea.

"We provide the food, service, paper products — everything but the table," Lehman said.

For the pig roast, Lehman lights the charcoal the night before the event and roasts the pig during the night.

Lehman said that his secret sauce was developed by an elderly gentleman who had been making it for 50 years. Four years ago, the 86-year-old gentleman sold the secret recipe to Lehman, who uses 450 gallons of it a year in his business in addition to selling gallons of it for individual orders.

"Many people have tried to duplicate it, but no one ever got close," Lehman said. Before he purchased the recipe, he had experimented with numerous other recipes but was never pleased with them.

"When I got the recipe, I was surprised by what's in it," he said. "I never even came close in trying to figure it out."

In addition to using the sauce for pig roasts, Lehman marinates the chicken in the sauce for 24 hours before grilling the chicken.

"I never had a lawsuit. We have had commercial liability for 10 years and never had a claim filed," Lehman said. "My wife and I are very particular."

It takes eight hours to clean up after a pig roast. At their Virginia home, they have a commercial commissary. In Mount Joy, a high pressure wash truck was used to clean the equipment.

"The best thing about barbecuing is meeting all the fine people," Lehman said. "There isn't too much that I don't like except missing all the major holidays. I'd like to spend just one Fourth of July



Jim and Faye Ting, left, eagerly await a chance to "pig out" at the pig roast prepared by Jake, center, and Harold Lehman.



Folks at the Kraybill Mennonite School Auction prepare to go "whole hog" as they form four lines while four people serve the carved pigs. White Oak Mills donated 11 hogs for the annual event.

with my wife and I alone."

The Lehmans are active members of the Mt. Pleasant Mennonite Church where they provide special dinners four times a year.

"Part of our belief is caring for people and serving the Lord. This (barbecuing) is the capacity God led us into and we like to do it for the church. Taking time to donate our talents for others puts things in perspective."

The Lehmans reserve Sunday as a day of rest and do not schedule barbecues for that day. Lehman

said, "We do use Sunday as a rain date for barbecues scheduled on Saturday, but in all our years of business, we never had to use a Sunday as a rain date."

His father Jake, who is now 81, was born in Elizabethtown. When he was nine months old, his parents moved to Virginia.

"I still say that I'm a Pennsylvanian," Jake said. "This is where my people live."

Jake continues to live on the same Virginia dairy farm since 1912. His son, Jake Jr., has taken

over management of the 100-cow herd.

"He has a cow that milks 20 gallons a day — the only cow in Virginia to milk that much on a two-times a day milking schedule," the older Lehman said.

Jake likes to continue to help with barbecuing and with farming. "It's a good combination," he said.

Lehman's Barbeque Inc. may be contacted at 1443 Fenteress Airfield, Chesapeake, Va. 23322 or call (804) 482-4091.



Harold Lehman, left, and his 81-year-old father Jake roast a hog in one of their 12 cookers.

Homestead Notes