



**On Being a Farm Wife**  
(and other hazards)  
**Joyce Bupp**

Lunch was a tasty one. Pork and sauerkraut. Mashed potatoes. Cinnamon apples, corn muffins, fresh milk.

A fitting sort of meal for a dreary, gray, mid-January day. The sort of meal to fuel a body to face the chilly damp to milk cows, feed calves, more hay and silage, chop wood. It's a somewhat old-fashioned "Pennsylvania Dutch" meat-and-potatoes meal that I get hungry for now and then. During cold weather. Come summer and 90-degree temperatures, pork and sauerkraut just doesn't have the appetite attraction it sparks on a blustery winter day.

Of course, it's the tradition of us German-heritage folks of the area to feast on pork and sauerkraut at New Year for good luck. I bagged that custom after serving several pork-and-sauerkraut New Year's dinners that were followed by growing seasons of either extreme dry or extremely wet, both wreaking havoc on our crops and feed production. So much for good luck.

It's my guess that the New Years pork and sauerkraut custom may have been based more

in the tradition of "butchering" than for good luck. Butchering, when the family's meat for the year was slaughtered and cured, was a major event for most rural families. And the holiday week between Christmas and New Year, with more extended family help likely available and usually dependable cold weather, may have just been a logical time to tackle such a major undertaking. With a mid-holiday butchering, there was plenty of fresh pork by January.

Butchering, by the way, is one heck of a lot of work.

Though I did not grow up in a family that butchered, marriage drew me into a group of relatives highly skilled in the process. And it was there among an extended family of in-laws that I learned what little I know firsthand about it.

Many farms of the area had their own butcher house. The one in which I first learned about the process - The Farmer's maternal grandfather's - was torn down years ago. One remains here on the farm, better known as the spring house. Its old, crumbling fireplace attests to a former use as a processing

facility for the family's food supplies.

The several-day butchering process began with the quick dispatching of probably a beef or two and several hogs that had been raised for this specific purpose. Hog carcasses had to be scaled in large troughs and the hair scraped from their hide with special circular hand tools. Usually all carcasses were left to hang in the cold of the butcher-house at least overnight, firming up the meat to cut more easily.

Before the pork could be cut and processed, most of the fat was removed for cooking down into lard. Years ago, it was a

mark of distinction to raise fat-laden pigs, a far cry from the super-lean porkers of today. In fact, cutting the thick layer of fat that was removed from the hogs into small cubes for rendering down into lard was one of the first jobs that could be assigned to a rank amateur like myself.

Cutting lard I could handle. But one still had to be careful not to cut fingers on the family's sharply-honed butcher knives. Later, I was promoted to helping scrape casings. Casings. The salt-water-soaked and cleaned intestines of hogs, used for stuffing with ground, seasoned

sausage meat. One had to scrape casings with care; if you tore a hole in a section, it was no good. And there were no food-grade-synthetic casings available for sausage-making.

After days of butchering, it took far more days to cure and smoke, salt or can, or wrap and freeze, the results.

I count among my many blessings the ease of buying a piece of fresh pork all ready to plunk in the oven.

And you don't want to get into the labors involved in making that sauerkraut prior to butchering season.



**Berks Society 3**

The past three months were really great for Farm Women Group 3. In October members had a nutritionist tell about health and labels. In November members held turkey raffle. Each member won something that had to do with a turkey dinner.

In December members enjoyed the Christmas party at the Yellow House Hotel. New

officers and new secret pals were selected. New officers are Lille Bucks, president; Marie Schollenberger, vice president;

Francis Moyer, secretary; Michele Ferreira, corresponding secretary; and Lora Oswald, treasurer.

**Lancaster Society 20**

On Thursday, January 8, Lancaster County, Farm Women No. 20 met at the home of Dorothy Eckman with Helen 'Tout as co-hostess. For the program Connie Rutt gave an overview of Eastern Europe although she spoke mostly about Poland as she is working there getting 4-H organizations started.

a baby is born, the mother stays in the hospital a week but it is up to the relatives and friends to provide them with food. Also when they go home they do not take the baby out for six weeks. If you do, you are considered a bad mother.

It was very interesting learning how they visit the schools with interpreters and the young people are getting involved. After their primary schooling, they go to a Technical School where they stay for the week as it would be impossible to commute.

Devotions were by Helen who read from Psalms 92 and from 107. The Lord's Prayer was prayed in unison and the Allegiance to the Flag was repeated. The president, Marie Foose, presided at the business meeting and the charities given her to take the county were "Make-A-Wish" and Water Street Rescue Mission.

She said Poland is flat with no mountains. They are 99% Catholic and have always been more or less as peasants although that is changing.

Dorothy Crawford reported three cards had been sent. There were 16 members present and the meeting closed by signing "Brighten The Corner." In February, the meeting will be at the home of Helen Harnish. There will be a Food Auction and each member should bring an item for the Food Bank.

Poland's biggest crop is sugar beets and that is where they get their sugar. Connie's daughter lives in Hungary. She said when



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