

Dietrich's Meats Sells Fresh From The Farm

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KRUMSVILLE (Berks Co.) —

Perhaps pickled goose gizzards, pig snouts, and liver pudding are not on your repertoire of foods you eat, but old-fashioned smoked meats without chemicals and hundreds of other mouth-savoring items are impossible to resist when you visit Dietrich's Meats.

Open the door to the market and one whiff of the wonderful meats and a quick glance at the meat counter, and you know that this meat is the best you can find.

"All meat is direct from the farm," said Verna Dietrich, matriarch of Dietrich's Meats in Krumsville.

Verna's husband Willard and their eldest son run the farm operation located on Willard's homestead, about five miles from the store. About 700 acres are used for cattle grazing and crops to feed the livestock raised for butchering. And this means more than beef. Goats, lamb, rabbits, and hogs, are also raised on the family farm in order to replenish the store supply.

"We have our own butcher shop and make everything ourselves," Verna said of the extensive list of foods available at their country store.

Sons Lynn and Marlin take charge of the slaughterhouse. Kill is done under USDA inspection on one to two days weekly. The remainder of the time the sons keep busy producing delicacies such as Mettwurst, Jagdwurst, Braunschweiger, Speckwurst, souse, tripe, kielbasa. . . . The list is never ending with basics such as freshly smoked hams, bacon, bolognas, and grain-fed beef.

Son Lynn, his wife Debbie, and their five children, and another son Marlin, his wife Dawn, and their three children work in the store and butcher shop from sunup to sundown and then some.

The story is told that 22 years ago, the family decided to stop milking and open a butchering shop in order to diversify the oper-



Verna Dietrich holds up some of the family's homemade bologna. Dietrichs make 60 varieties of processed products such as kielbasa, beef sticks, beef jerky, dried beef, Mettwurst, Jagdwurst. . . .

Homestead Notes

ation. The family found its niche in producing specialty meats.

The full-line of poultry products includes smoked and fresh turkeys, chickens, ducks, geese, pheasants, cornish hens, chukar, partridges, quail, squabs, muscovy ducks and even chicken feet.

"We have 60 varieties of all-meat processed products that we make, like ring bologna, kielbasa, beef sticks, Old Smokie sticks, beef jerky, dried beef, hot dogs, and head cheese," Dawn said.

Free samples of many of these meats are offered to customers daily.

"We use all natural casings—no plastic or artificial additives in anything," said Dawn.

About the only thing the family

orders pre-made is lamb's tongue. "Because you get only one tongue to a lamb and we only butcher one or two weekly, we need to order additional tongues," Verna explained.

Ethnic groups can always find what they are looking for. "If someone asks for it, we make it," Verna said. She said that they develop their own recipes and change it until the product tastes "right" to the customer.

About 15 years ago a bakery was added on the premises. Debbie oversees the baking. The bakery items are also reminiscent of days gone by. Funeral pie, strawberry-rhubarb, lemon sponge, wet bottom shoo-fly, funny cake, Montgomery pie, mincemeat pie, and AP cakes are some of the standard offerings.

Theoretically, Dawn is in charge of the store and bookkeeping; Debbie, the bakery, and Verna oversees everything, but, "If you see something that needs done—you do it," Verna said of the family's unwritten philosophy. "If red beets need to be pickled, we just do it."

Hickory nuts, dried snitz, canned pickles, red beet horseradish, corn relish, chow chow, pickled artichokes, grape butter, jellies, jams, dried meadow tea, and even dried string beans are some other Pennsylvania Dutch specialties they sell.

The uniqueness of the place seems unending. During a recent tour, Verna keeps pointing with pride to the varied items the family business offers. "We make sauerkraut the old-fashioned way—in crocks. You don't hear of other stores doing that."

Or, "We render our own lard." Or, "We let our beef hang in the coolers two weeks to age. It's more tender that way."

Mettwurst, knockwurst. . . whatever foods people remember from childhood, and some things that they don't remember, are packed into corners of the country store.

The store does very little wholesaling but sells all the meats through their store and at Renningers Farmers Market, open Friday

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Dawn Dietrich refills a tray with the family's farm-raised beef cuts.



Pork hams, turkey hams, sausages in many flavors, and ring bologna are a few of the smoked items offered. Dean Dietrich is one of the eight grandchildren who work at the store during off-school hours.



Customer Herbie Brandt purchases items he can't find elsewhere from Jessica Reimert, one of several employees in addition to the Dietrich family.



Lemon sponge, wet bottom shoo-fly, mincemeat, chocolate shoo-fly pies, funny cake, and many other old Pennsylvania Dutch favorites are baked daily by Debbie Dietrich.