

Hess Barbecue Wins National Awards For Innovative Dinners

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Lancaster Farming Staff

WILLOW STREET (Lancaster Co.) — New ideas and eye appeal mark the difference between running a mediocre catering business or one that forges ahead. Presentation also gave Hess' Barbecue the edge in national competition, according to owners Lloyd and Paul Hess.

The family-owned business walked away with the coveted top prizes and \$2,000 in two contests during the recent convention of the American Association of Meat Processors (AAMP).

Two separate contests, one featuring beef and the other featuring pork, were open to AAMP members. Wanted were consumer-friendly meals that could be produced in 30 minutes or less.

"The average housewife doesn't know 45 minutes in advance what she will prepare for dinner," Lloyd, the youngest of the two brothers, explained. "The industry wanted a whole meal that the average housewife could pick up at a meat shop, take home, and prepare in 30 minutes or less."

The majority of points were given for desirable flavor and edibility, but entries also were scored on seasoning, marinating, packaging, creativity, and presentation.

All entries needed to be precooked for judging and also presented in market-ready form. Cooking instructions and ingredients needed to be included with the entry.

Before the convention, Lloyd said he scrambled to try a few ideas on his wife Barbara and their children, Kim, 15, and Eric, 15. The family favorite for the beef competition were steak tri-tips marinated in teriyaki sauce to grill, corn on the cob with herb butter, and Southwestern Jamaican bean rice.

For the pork entry, the Hess family decided on a breakfast of sweet Italian sausage and eggs in a burrito wrap served with fresh fruit.

"We were fortunate to win both," Lloyd said of the only two categories that included a cash prize of \$1,000 each.

"Consumers can expect to see more creativity in years to come," Lloyd said of the meat industry.

"When it comes to food, not only must it taste good but it must look good," Lloyd said. The family business made a gradual switch from a full-fledged butcher shop to catering to as many as 10 events a day.

Paul and his wife Brenda are in charge of catering upscale weddings. Their services include fresh flowers, white tents,



Lloyd Hess shows off the ready-to-cook dinners that garnered top prizes and \$1,000 each at the recent national convention of the American Association of Meat Processors.

chairs, china, and other items needed for the event.

In 1987, the brothers took over the butcher shop their father Paul Hess Sr. began. Consumer needs were changing and the brothers soon realized they needed to pursue a different direction to stay viable. They conducted their first pork barbecue, which became so popular that butchering was soon phased out and the brothers turned to full time catering.

"We thrive on presentation. If you don't put your whole self into it, you fall behind," Lloyd said of the need to constantly think up new menus and new ways to present food.

It's this philosophy that keeps them excelling in upscale catering.

"If food looks good, it will taste good," Lloyd said of the importance of presentation.

The brothers said conventions are a

great place to learn how to build buffets, set prices, and the details needed to run a successful business.

Recently Hesses purchased a portable hickory smoker that enables them serve 1,000 people within minutes.

"People like to see food being made," Lloyd said of the importance of preparing food at the site of the event.

At the AAMP convention, another Lancaster County meat processor — Stoltzfus Meats of Intercourse — also won a national award, for their sweet bologna entry in the regional meats competition.

Hess's Barbecue Catering is located at 2635 Willow Street Pike, Willow Street. Phone (717) 464-3374.

Ozone Found To Have Direct Effect On Genes Linked With Plants' Aging

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Penn State research has shown, for the first time, that ozone, a major smog constituent, has a direct effect on the genes associated with the aging process in plants.

Dr. Jennifer Miller, who produced the finding as part of her doctoral thesis, said, "Plant scientists have long known that ozone accelerates the process through which the leaves of a plant age, eventually die and drop. However, our work provides the first evidence that the genetic program that controls the aging process is directly affected by ozone exposure."

The findings may help other researchers find a way to bolster plants' resistance to ozone, a critical component of smog, which causes an estimated \$3 billion in agricultural losses in the United States each year, she notes.

Miller conducted her experiments with *Arabidopsis*, a plant with a short six to eight week life span and a small gene pool that is often used in plant studies. In one experiment, she grew the plants from seed and exposed one group of plants to low levels of ozone for six hours a day while leaving another group untreated.

"The ozone treatment was higher than ambient levels but not high enough to cause visible signs of damage immediately following the exposure. Ozone concentrations in polluted areas can reach the levels used in these experiments but not usually for six hours straight," Miller explains.

The plants received ozone exposure a few days after they had produced a fifth leaf. As the leaves aged, yellowing was accelerated and growth retarded on the ozone-treated plants. Examining the plants' aging-related genes every other day during the 14-day treatment period showed that some of them were turned on earlier in the ozone-stressed plants indicating a direct effect on the plants' genetic program.

She proposes that oxidative products, the same free radicals that are thought to influence produce aging in people, also may be a possible aging cue for plants. She says, as others have shown, it may be possible to enhance ozone resistance in plants simply by selecting plant varieties with higher levels of anti-oxidants.

Mercer Tour Celebrates Bicentennial

MERCER (Mercer Co.) — The Mercer County Country Tour featuring eight stops in the Mercer area will be Saturday and Sunday, September 16 and 17. The "drive it yourself" tour features stops representative of the agriculture industry and rural community of Mercer County. Stops reflecting the history of Mercer County are also included this year in recognition of the county's Bicentennial celebration.

Participants in the free tour can make the stops in any order and stay for as little or long a time as desired. Tour hours are 1-6:30 p.m. A self-guiding tour map with descriptions and driving directions may be obtained at many area agriculture busi-

nesses and at the Mercer County Cooperative Extension office, Route 19, north of Mercer.

Stops include visits to a dairy farm, Amore Holstein Farm; the Mercer County Historical Society and Museum (Saturday, 10-3 only); Mercer County Courthouse; a hog and grain farm, the Struthers Farm; Mercer Livestock Market; Mercer County 4-H Park for food and restroom (Saturday only); Munnell Run Farm (Sunday food and restroom stop) and Rains Angus Beef Cattle; and Circle C Horse Ranch.

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