

HOG KILLING

Raising and butchering hogs has long been an important part of meat production in Onslow County. Many families butchered several hogs during the late fall and winter, when the weather became cold enough to help prevent spoilage while they processed the meat. The meat processed during a hog killing would provide food for most of the following year. Hog killings also brought people together as neighbors gathered in turn to help with each family's hogs. Sometimes those that helped would be paid in meat.



After killing the hogs their hair had to be removed by softening the bristles in hot water. The hair could then be more easily scraped away. Butchering the hog was precise work, care had to be taken not to puncture the internal organs which would spoil the meat.



Killing and butchering hogs often took the work of several people. Hogs weighed too much for one person to lower into the scalding vat, which could be dangerous work.



Once the hog was butchered the meat could then be processed. Nearly all of the hog could be used for some food product including the brains, feet, some internal organs, and even the tail. Much of the left over meat from butchering went towards making sausage. Rendering the fat produced lard, used for frying and in seasoning. Most of the meat needed to be cured in order to preserve it. Salt may have been the most important ingredient when curing pork as it created an environment that did not allow bacteria to thrive. Hams, after being salted, were smoked to help preserve the meat but also to provide flavor.

HOW TO CURE PORK
We find the following method of curing Pork in the *Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper*; and as the author assures us that he has tried the plan, and that his "Aunt Betty" is never ashamed to cook a piece of her very nice ham for her "very nice company," after having been put up after the manner suggested, we think it would be well for some of our "pork packing" readers to try the plan, as an experiment, if nothing more. The writer says:
After the pork is dressed and had suitable time to cool, lay it on a clean bench or block for cutting; take particular care to cut in pieces of nearly equal size, (if your family is small) let each piece be small, say 1 1/2 or 2 lbs., save out the hams and shoulders (and sometimes the chops) for smoking, first sprinkle coarse salt of the best kind, that which is white and clean, in the bottom of the barrel, then lay the pieces of pork in snug and tight, and so on alternately, a layer of salt and a layer of pork. Put no water or brine in at all at first. After this part is attended to, take for each pair of hams, 1 oz. saltpetre and 1 pint of molasses, put it together in a tin basin, or something of the kind, put it at the fire till it boils, then rub the molasses and saltpetre on the hams with your hands, as hot as you possibly can bear so to do, then put the hams in a pickling tub, let them lay about twenty-four hours, then make a brine of clean salt and pure water, sufficiently strong to heat up an egg, scum off the filth as it rises to the top while boiling, then take it from the fire, let it get sufficiently cool so it will not scald the hams, then pour it on. Let the hams remain in this two weeks, taking particular care to turn them over every day; at the end of two weeks, take them out, hang them up, let them drain a little, then put them in for smoking. After the hams are out take the pickle or brine which they have been in, scald it over, scum it off, let it cool, then pour it on the pork, which, with the brine already made by it, will be sufficient. If the readers of the "Newspaper" will try it, they will find it a good method.

People passed down their methods of curing pork generation to generation. However, recipes and methods might be shared across the country. The *Wilmington Journal* published this pork curing method from Philadelphia in 1849.



Onslow County became famous for its peanut fed hams, which farmers claimed gave the meat its distinct flavor. Even the county seal reflects the ham's importance to the county's food heritage.



To learn more about pork processing in Onslow County scan these QR codes or visit the associated URLs.



<https://youtu.be/HLe8c2AsRy8>



<https://youtu.be/oCFxwprLuoA>



<https://youtu.be/tZFRuPFENio>