From Gratons to Boudin

At Boucherie Cajuns Use 'Everything But Bristles'

By MARY ALICE FONTENOT

The sub-freezing temperatures that plagued south Louisiana during January would have been just right for an old-time Cajun ‘boucherie’ or hog butchering.

Cold weather, preferably freezing weather, was a ‘must’ for the boucherie in the days before refrigeration and home freezers. Otherwise the fresh meat would have spoiled before it could be used.

The boucherie was always a social event of sorts. It was a time for friends and neighbors to get together, to share the work and boisterous treats, then ‘volley’ and/or dance late into the night.

Procedures

There were certain time-honored boucherie procedures which were followed painstakingly. The hog to be butchered was penned up some six weeks prior to the anticipated butchering time and fed on corn to improve the flavor of the meat. The hog was not fed the night before the butchering to facilitate cleaning the casings needed for the meat.

On the appointed day the family of the boucherie host was up before dawn getting everything ready. First thing was starting fires under iron wash pots for boiling water to loosen the bristles on the animal. The hog’s head and feet were cut off and the head hung up to drip, after the ears and fat were removed. See More Acadiana News On Page 70

Preparations included making a bed of horses hay near the pots of boiling water. This helped to hold the heat of the water longer and kept the work cleaner.

Next, the head and feet were cut off and the head hung to drip. The ears were removed and the head was cut into two halves.

The hog’s head cheese is made by cutting a pocket into the head, stuffing the pocket with highly seasoned chopped lean pork, then stuffing the whole into that part of the intestine called “la tronche.” This was hung outside for several days during cold weather. The product was usually boiled in water to make a gumbo, then sliced for serving.

The hog’s stomach, “Choupin,” is the stomach of the animal. The stomach of the hog, or “trump,” is “pumped,” stuffed with highly seasoned rice dressing and seasoned meat.

“L’epine,” or “pork palate” or the bone in what the Acadians terms “la queue,” a membrane that looks like lettuce.

“Grillades,” a marine’s favorite dish, is a mixture of lean pork, beef, and a combination of seasonings, green onions, and a sprinkling of vinegar, “cayenne,” or “the sales,” is boiled pork.

A favorite dish on boucherie day was ham and cheese.