

They Teach Pork Producers How To Butcher

When Doug Wharton and Andy Lane conduct their three-day butchering workshops, they cover everything from shooting the animal to making the right cuts for making sausage and cured meats. They focus on not wasting anything and the shared experience of working together and eating good food. Plus, they help participants avoid the mistakes the business partners made when they started homesteading in 2009.

Workshops are held at their families' Hand Hewn Farm in Fresno, Ohio, in an old dairy barn and milking parlor renovated with a walk-in cooler and workspace for cutting and processing meat. They raise heritage breed pigs to butcher and recently added beef butchering. The partners also travel throughout the U.S. to offer workshops at participants' farms to butcher their hogs.

Wharton emphasizes that their primary purpose is to teach attendees to process meat for themselves, not to sell.

Wharton and Lane set the tone of respect for the animal. They shoot it in the pasture where it is relaxed and with other pigs. The pig is then moved to an area where it can be thoroughly washed before it is scalded, scraped, gutted, split and hung to cool. Participants help clean casings to use for making sausage and prep the offal.

On the second day, they learn how to make standard and optional cuts of meat. The third day is devoted to salting, seasoning and curing meat and learning how blood is used in Finnish, Italian and Spanish dishes.

"On the third day there is a lot of feasting with a large charcuterie spread with everything from liverwurst and pate to tenderloins wrapped in bacon," Wharton says.

They charge a flat rate fee to travel to farms. Typically, the producer sells tickets to local people who want to attend the workshop. Anywhere from 8 to 10 is a good number so everyone can participate in the hands-on experience, Wharton says. The dates are scheduled during cool weather seasons,



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especially when the farm doesn't have a walk-in cooler to cool the meat overnight.

Lane and Wharton want to dispel myths and fears about butchering and help people avoid mistakes.

For example, it's common to shoot pigs with a .22, but it's not fool-proof, so Lane and Wharton use a .410 slug. Also, they use propane to heat the scalding water. It's too

easy to put out a wood fire with water when the pig is dropped in, and wood smoke can create problems.

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Jerolmack starts his ginger in trays in March in heated greenhouses and transplants them to beds in unheated greenhouses the first of June.

He's Growing Tropical Ginger In Maine

Ginger is a crop that normally grows in the tropics, but Ian Jerolmack harvested 5,500 lbs. of ginger from a 5,700-sq. ft. greenhouse last year in Maine. That equates to more than 20 tons per acre compared to standard worldwide yields of 4 to 10 tons per acre.

"Last year's crop blew us away with yield and quality," says Jerolmack. "We had huge stunning plants. I was a nervous wreck about it, afraid we wouldn't find a

market for it all. We would send a crew in to fill a 100-lb. order, and they would get it from 15 ft. of bed."

Jerolmack found his market. By the end of the year, he had sold every pound. For a northern grower like Jerolmack, selling everything fresh is necessary. It has more flavor, is juicier, and lacks the fiber of store-bought ginger. However, that also means it has a shorter shelf life and his crop can't handle shipping.

Tropical ginger found in most stores will have matured in the ground over an 8 to 9 mo. growing season. The season in Maine is too short for the ginger to reach full maturity, one reason Jerolmack buys new rhizomes each year to plant.

"We start our ginger in trays in March in heated greenhouses and transplant them to beds in unheated greenhouses the first of June," he says.

"Typically, we don't pick until the first of October when the temperatures start to drop," says Jerolmack. "The closer we get to mid-November, the more there is to harvest. However, this year we had an early freeze."

The short growing season is only one of the challenges Jerolmack has faced in his 10-year journey to amazing yields.

Jerolmack quickly learned that ginger needed to be grown in the greenhouse for heat, but then it was subject to sunburn. "We had to put shade cloth over it," he says.

The shade cloth made watering a challenge, as did maintaining humidity. "In 2020 we used misters, but the water went into the soil, and we overwatered," recalls Jerolmack. "Ginger likes water passing through the soil constantly but standing water will cause it to rot in a week."

Jerolmack is sloping his beds so the water

will drain better. He is also trying drain tiles in some beds.

One big change he made in 2021 was to shut down venting in greenhouses with ginger. In previous years he tried to keep temperatures in the 80 to 90-degree range. At the same time, he shifted misting to on-again and off-again to maintain humidity without overwatering.

"The primary difference last year was that we realized the ginger didn't care if it was 120 degrees if it was humid," says Jerolmack.

Fertility was another thing to be fine-tuned. "It needs a lot of nutrition," says Jerolmack. "It's like corn. It wants nitrogen if it's going to grow fast and vigorous."

Another change in production practices in recent years may have played a role. Jerolmack has switched to no-till and the use of cover crops and heavy mulching.

"Our system means no weeds," he explains. "We can plant very close and not worry about disturbing fragile and important feeder roots since we don't cultivate."

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Expert Farrier Meets Draft Horse Demand

Norman Yoder's passion is breeding and showing Percheron horses but his work as a farrier replacing shoes on the hooves of draft horses brings in the bulk of his income.

Yoder makes regular trips to large cities in Colorado and California to shoe horses, working out of his truck for 6 mos. of the year. "The demand for shoeing is crazy, it just never lets up," he says, explaining that the use of draft horses to pull carriages in large cities is fueling the demand. He says shoeing horses is really hard work, but it pays well and he's good at it. "I'm 32 and the workout is like going to the gym every day for 8 hrs. I feel the strain, so I know I can't shoe horses all my life. Plus, we just had a baby 6 mos. ago, so I'm passing some of my shoeing work on to a cousin and hope to cut back on the travel."

Yoder tells customers to mark their calendars when he's finished with a job because he'll be back in 8 weeks. "I do the work, customers write me a check, and when the shoeing is done, I head back home."

At his Iowa farm, Yoder spends many evenings training his horses and mules for showing. "I have a large indoor arena and I'm often training horses until 9, 10 or even 11 at night," he says. Percherons are his preferred breed, though recently he's found success producing "half-draft" horses. He calls them gentle giants. Yoder keeps about 20 mares to foal and generally has 40 to 50 yearlings in training.

"A lot of my half-draft customers are wealthy or retired folks who just want a gentle and sturdy horse so they can 'love 'em, rub 'em and ride 'em.' Most of them seemed pleased with the horses they've gotten from our program."

Asked what his secret is for training horses, Yoder says it's important to figure out ways "to get inside a horse's head. It's like the challenge that parents face training a 2, 3 or 4-year-old child, finding ways to get them to behave and perform without them feeling like they're being forced to do something. I've learned a lot of my training methods by trial and error and have been able to improve on



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them over time. I think of it as mastering the art of horse psychology."

Yoder says one of the best ways to market a horse is through a YouTube video. "When a customer can watch the horse perform in a video, it's easier for them to decide whether

that horse will fit their needs," he says. Yoder also relies on Troyer Auctions in Colorado to sell his horses.

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