



Hogs are dipped and rolled in a bathtub full of boiling water.

THEY USE BATHTUB TO SCALD HOG Ohio Family Goes "Hog Wild" On Butchering Day

By Nancy Lowe Lonsiner

Dean Wyler, Fresno, Ohio, likes butchering day better than Christmas. For him, the Saturday after Thanksgiving is the best day of the year.

Butchering isn't just an economical way to get meat processed for the Wylers. It's also a time for neighbors and friends to gather around. Most come prepared to work but there are also many spectators.

Butchering day begins just a little earlier for the Wylers than a normal day. Dean is up at 4:30 a.m. to milk his herd of Holsteins. His son John and daughter Deana are up at 4:30 a.m. to milk his herd of Holsteins. His son John and daughter Deana are up shortly afterwards. Their time-honored butchering schedule requires that the scalding fires be started by 6 a.m. Dean's father, who lives nearby, tends the fires.

As neighbors finish their own chores they arrive with their tools. The ladies go to the kitchen to help with dinner and the men meet at the fires.

Each worker has his own specialty. Just before the hogs are dipped into the scalding water, "Butch" the water testing specialist is called to the scene. He flicks his finger through the water three times, then decides if the water needs to be heated more or be cooled by adding cold water. "If the water is too hot it sets the hair. If it's too cold, the hogs can't be scraped clean," he explains.

The thought of using a thermometer is scorned. "Don't need it as long as Butch has any fingers left," they say.

The hogs are dipped and rolled by means of crossed ropes in a modern-looking bathtub. As soon as it's possible to "wring" a leg (remove hair by twisting a hand just above the hoof), the hog is removed and pulled off to one side. While one crew begins scraping, the scalding crew gets another hog to be dipped. Butch checks to make sure the water is still hot enough - and so it goes until all six of the hogs hang from tripods, scraped clean.

Once the hogs are hung, Everett Reed, considered to be master of removing entrails and cooking lard, picks out a younger man to start teaching him the skills. "We old guys won't be around to do this forever. It's time to train someone to take our places," he says.

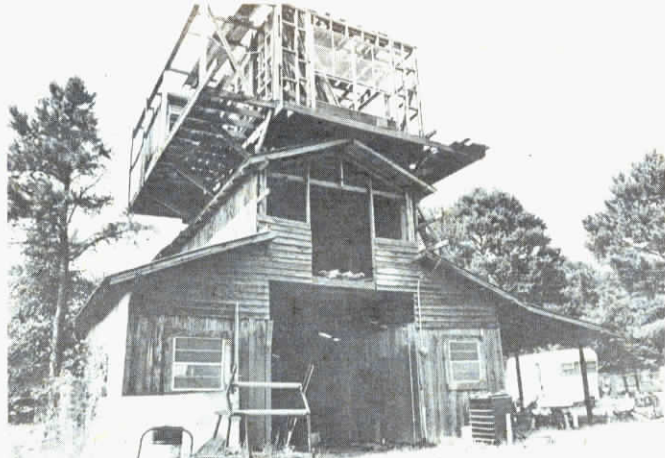


Sausage is stuffed, lard is rendered, and paunhaus (corn meal cooked in the headmeat broth) are all made by the end of the annual butchering day.

There's little waste in the Wyler butchering operation although they didn't save the lungs or spleen until recently when Dean heard of a fellow who especially favored them for gumbo stew.

At noon the work slows as the men eat in shifts. While the first tableful is eating, the other men put the lard on the fire and start cooking a kettle of headmeat. After the headmeat kettle starts to bubble, the kidneys are strung on a wire and hooked over the edge of the large black iron pot. They cook quicker and need to be removed before the other meat is done.

Butchering day is long but the results are long lasting. This summer while they filled silo, combined wheat and made hay, the table was still filled with meats - it might have been ham, sausage, or schwattamaugo (cold sliced lunch meat made from the headmeat stuffed into a hog's stomach and intestines). And that is another thing Dean likes about butchering. The good eating.



"The view from the top is beautiful," says Roy Lyle, who's copying a birdhouse design to build his unusual home.

ALL THE COMFORTS OF HOME

He's Building A House On Top Of His Barn!

It's not uncommon for people to slam on their brakes as they drive by 79-year-old Roy Lyle's farm near Tyler, Texas. Lyle says most people who see his unusual construction project think they're looking at tornado damage of some kind. No one believes him when he says he's building a home on top of his horse barn.

"The view from the top is just beautiful," says Lyle, noting that he can see lush pine woodlands surrounding a nearby lake from the floor of his unfinished elevated home.

As designed, the 24 by 24-ft. home will

have a bedroom, bath and a combination kitchen, living and dining room, as well as hand-crafted cabinets. "I'm even going to put a fireplace up there," says Lyle, who told FARM SHOW he followed the design of a large birdhouse he once saw to develop his unusual housing idea.

Access to the house will be through an 8-ft. spiral staircase. But during construction, Lyle gains entrance by entering the barn and climbing from the loft out onto the roof and up to the house.

MAKES ON-FARM CALLS

Freelance Mechanic

About 25 farmers near Ovid, N.Y., share an unusual service: they hire Eric Thompson to make on-farm equipment repairs.

Five years ago, Thompson left his job as a mechanic with a Deere dealership to become a freelance mechanic for farmers within a 25-mile radius of Ovid. There's been good demand for his services, which covers everything from engine tuneups to major repair jobs, such as overhauling engines, hydraulic systems and transmissions.

Thompson, who relies on word-of-mouth for advertising, says farmers hire him because he makes "house calls" and offers relatively low rates, flexible work hours - and he fixes only what needs to be fixed. He charges \$18 per hour. "Most implement dealerships in this area get \$25 or more per hour for mechanical work," he told FARM SHOW.

"When a product is under guarantee, many dealership mechanics replace all wear parts, though possibly only one part is faulty. It results in higher labor costs. I try to save my customers as much money as possible by fixing only what needs to be fixed. For example, last spring I rebuilt a diesel engine which had spun a rod bearing. I partially disassembled the motor, removed the bad crankshaft and journal, replaced one bad cylinder, then reassembled it with all of the original parts. I still had almost \$2,000 in parts in my job, but a dealership mechanic would probably have

installed all new sleeves and pistons and charged \$7,000 or \$8,000."

Thompson doesn't offer a written warranty. "I do my work in good faith. If I mess up, I'll fix it at my expense."

Thompson, raised on a New York dairy farm, says he's been "tinkering with machinery ever since I was old enough to tinker." He bought his first tractor at age 16 and rebuilt it while attending Colbleskil Agricultural School, from which he graduated in 1977.

He carries a full supply of work tools in his pickup, along with a supply of implement and tractor factory service manuals "that I swear by."

For others who may want to become a freelance farm mechanic, Thompson offers this advice: "You must be diverse enough to work on a variety of things, and you must be ready to work on anything and everything right where it might be. For example, last Saturday I had to dig a disabled tractor out of the snow to get at its faulty fuel injection pump. It was cold, windy and a miserable place to be working without heat or shelter."

But Thompson says he made the right move. "After you've worked for yourself for five years, it's tough to get an offer good enough that you'll go back to work for someone else."

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