



Mehl has 192 milk stools in her collection, including these homemade one-legged and tee-shaped pedestal models.

Farm Girl Loves Collecting Milk Stools

Jean Hunziker Mehl knows as much about milk stools and their history as anyone around. Jean began collecting stools about 15 years ago. "I bought a stool at an auction with a box of junk. I painted it Ethan Allen blue, and put it in the bathroom."

Since then she has been going great guns. "I now have 192 stools. Each one is different, and they're in different states of repair."

Jean says there are four traditional classifications of milking stools. The first is the pedestal which is a one legged, or tee shaped milking stool. Then there is the four legged milking stool, the bench style and, the rarest of the four, a sanitary milking stool.

Jean explained how the sanitary milking stool worked. "It was designed to keep the milk pail out of the straw and cow manure. There is a long board or platform very similar to a step table with no legs. The flat end of the platform is positioned under the cow with the milk pail setting on it. The dairy person sits on the raised seat."

Jean points out that prohibition resulted in a boom in milk stool production during the 1920's. "Ice cream parlors were very popular during prohibition which caused the government to begin looking at cow barns and classifying grade A milk. If you cleaned up your barns and used metal milking stools, you received a premium on milk."

While many milk stools were factory produced, Jean says many of the most interest-

ing stools are one-of-a-kind, made by farmers from whatever they had on hand. "I have some made with Model T Ford brake drum legs."

When she first started collecting, Jean received many stools from friends and family. One of Jean's most prized stools is the one her husband Harry had in the milking barn where he grew up. "The last milk stool I bought came from Greeley, Colorado. A lady saw a story about one in *Country Woman* (May/June 1999 issue) and said there was a milk stool at a local antique store that was made in England and ties around your waist so you don't have to pick it up each time you move. I had another one like this from Wisconsin that I bought about five years ago for \$20. The new one from Colorado was \$85."

Many of Jean's milk stools are stored in the house. "The milk stools are like the children. I keep some in the house and in different places. One stool that is unique was made in Philadelphia and it is unique because the feet were pointed."

When buying stools from antique shops, Jean came up with a way to tell if they are really milking stools. "You can usually see where the farmer grabbed it with his dirty hands. I just dampen the legs a little and see if they smell like manure."

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One of Mehl's most prized stools is one her husband Harry had in the milking barn where he grew up (left). At far right is a 3-legged Amish-made milk stool.



Stool at center was factory-made by the Hokulin Fence Factory of Goodfield, Ill.



Stool at center was made with the lid off a corn planter. Metal stool at far right uses a milk can lid for the seat.



Forseth's "locomotive" traveling barbecue includes two models. The big one is built two-thirds scale to a real locomotive and can handle two pigs at a time.

"Traveling Barbecue Is A Great Way To Supplement My Income"

"We've covered a lot of miles with it the past three years doing custom barbecue cooking. It's a great way to supplement our income," says Steve Forseth, who recently sent FARM SHOW photos of his "locomotive" traveling barbecue, which includes two locomotive-shaped barbecues, towed by a supply truck decked out as a portable kitchen.

The big barbecue is built two-thirds scale to a real locomotive and weighs 3,000 lbs. It consists of a 3-ft. dia., 5/16-in. thick steel pipe mounted on the axle and springs off an old Ford pickup. Meat is cooked on grates in the middle section of the pipe. There's no fire directly under the meat. It's cooked entirely by convection by a propane-fueled fire at the back of the pipe. The heavy steel door over the grates is raised or lowered by a manually-operated winch.

"It draws a lot of attention wherever we go. We call it our '9 Chow Line' after the Engine No. 9 song," says Forseth. "We're getting to be well-known around central Montana and are licensed to go anywhere in the state."

"We use it to cook beef briskets and ribs as well as pigs. The big cooker can handle two pigs at a time. It takes about 18 hours to cook a pig so we start slow cooking it one day ahead. When it's done the meat is so tender that you don't even need a knife to pull it apart. One big advantage of our design is that we don't have flareup problems caused by dripping pork fat like you can with a conventional spit-type cooker. We roast a lot of potatoes and beans at the back of the cooker."

"We've used it for everything from a customer appreciation day for a large recreational vehicle company - where we cooked



Big barbecue is towed by a supply truck that's decked out as a portable kitchen.

for 620 people in 1 1/2 hours - to weddings and high school reunions. Next July we plan to serve 2,000 people at one event. We usually hire 10 or 12 neighbor women to help us put everything together. We pull it behind an old U-Haul truck which we converted into a mobile, self-contained kitchen. It's equipped with four sinks, freezer, cooler, refrigerator, and a 4,000-watt generator to run it all.

"We've had so much demand that we built the smaller cooker which handles a small hog. We usually haul it on a pickup, but sometimes we hook the two locomotive cookers together when we show them at parades."

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