

## Rare Hog Breed Catches On Fast

Carl Blake doesn't believe in "build it and they will come". He has taken the initiative to build a following for his rare Swabian Hall hogs which didn't even exist in North America 2 years ago (see Vol. 33, No. 4 for FARM SHOW'S first report). Since then the Swabian Hall has become the "in-demand" hog for a number of top chefs around the country and has won acclaim among cured meat lovers.

"If people taste the meat, you don't have to push it," says Blake. "They tell me they've never had anything like it. We have chefs serving Swabian Hall pork in fine restaurants from Chicago to San Francisco and St. Paul to Houston."

He credits the taste and quality of fat and muscle with both breeding and ration. Though he feeds breeding herds traditional corn and soymeal rations, meat animals are finished for two months on peanuts, rye, barley and canarygrass seed with acorns, when available.

Whatever he's doing must work because one of Blake's pigs won top honors in COCHON 555 San Francisco. The event is a traveling contest that requires participating chefs to use the entire carcass of a heritage breed pig in a variety of dishes from appetizer to dessert. In the case of Staffan Terje, the San Francisco chef who won with a Swabian Hall pig from Blake, he even used the blood and rendered lard.

His dessert item was hog's blood cupcakes with whipped lard frosting. A judge described it as tasting like a "moist chocolate cupcake".

Getting his rare breed noticed didn't just happen. Blake emphasizes that you have to have the right product for the market and package it right. He promotes the pork, the pig, its heritage and the way he raises it.

Blake has worked to build awareness through one-on-one interaction with chefs as well as local farmers market customers.

The chef effort starts with researching top chefs, finding out what their specialties are and only then contacting them about his pork.

"I call them up, explain what I am doing and ask if I can visit them," explains Blake. "When I visit, I give them some of my pork and ask them to try it. So far we have been building demand as fast as we have built our hog numbers."

To find local buyers, Blake takes his prepared pork to area farmer's markets and gives out free samples. He also donates pigs to be prepared by local chefs for fund-raising banquets. Both efforts result in increased awareness and local sales.

Having a winning hog at a COCHON 555 has opened doors for Blake with other chefs. Blake's pork was the featured pork at the James Beard Foundation Annual Dinner in Chicago. In addition to feature stories and mentions in national food publications, he has been invited to participate with more pigs



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at future events.

Blake walks a fine line, building demand and supply at the same time. He currently has around 250 F1 (initial cross) Swabian Hall animals in his herd. He has begun cross breeding the multiple lines in an effort to create a purebred Swabian Hall. His goal is 200 breeding sows for meat and breeding animal sales.

Meanwhile, he continues to produce F1's

and maintain the original breeding lines for each parent breed. "We aren't making money yet, but we have to take it a step at a time," he says. "Our goal is to produce 50 to 100 pigs for meat a month in a consistent fashion for a consistent demand."

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Howard Arnold uses a homemade bagger system with treadle scale to fill 50-lb. bags with shelled corn. System uses a covered gravity box that's filled by an auger.



Elevator carries corn to a cut-out 5-gal. bucket, which directs grain into a bag. Bottom of bag lays in a second bucket fixed to a treadle scale board. When bag reaches 50 lbs., board tips and activates a shut-off switch on elevator.

## Treadle Scale Makes Bagging Easy

Selling shelled corn for home heating and also to deer hunters is a nice side business for Howard Arnold, but bagging the grain used to be a slow and tedious job. Since he came up with his bagger system with treadle scale, filling 50-lb. bags is now fast and easy.

"We can bag a ton of corn in 40 min.," says Arnold. "When the bag hits 50 lbs., the treadle scale shuts off the auger. We used to have to weigh every bag on a platform scale. Now we just weigh once in a while."

The bagging system is almost as simple as the treadle scale with shut-off. Arnold took an old gravity box and mounted it on a post and beam framework. He attached a ladder at one end and installed an access door and a roof hatch.

The posts are sections of old telephone poles buried to frost level. Beams tie them together and provide a framework to hold the gravity box.

"We used rough cut pine to add 5 ft. to the sides of the wagon and covered it with a plywood roof and shingles," says Arnold. "It holds 8 to 10 tons and can be filled with an auger."

Arnold fabricated a new chute for the wagon to direct the grain into the elevator. The elevator is an 8-ft. length of an old 16-ft. grain elevator. It carries the corn to the bagger. A cut out 5-gal. bucket directs the grain into a bag. The top of the bag slides over the bucket while its bottom drops into a second bucket fixed to the 2 by 12-in. "treadle scale" board.

"The treadle scale is like a teeter-totter," explains Arnold. "There is a 50-lb. weight on the other end of the board. When the sack reaches 50 lbs., the board tips and activates a shut-off switch for the elevator."

Once Arnold has replaced the full bag with an empty one, he hits a toggle switch, and the process is repeated.

"The plywood, shingles and screws to hang the plywood and siding are about the only things we bought for the project," says Arnold. "We've used it for about 4 years without a problem. We even had some guys use it to bag rye grass seed."

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## Cat Rides Big Attraction At Farmer's Market

Wagon rides with wheeled tractors are fun, but do you know what it feels like to ride on a Caterpillar?

Roy Ginochio had a feeling folks might be interested, so last year he and a few friends built a 10-passenger carrier on the back of a 1935 Caterpillar. On a record-breaking day in August, 148 folks lined up to ride the "Creepy Crawler" around Forest Home Farms in San Ramon, Calif., host to a farmer's market. Besides fruits and vegetables, the 17-acre farm offers educational tours that include 30 old tractors restored by volunteers like Ginochio.

With help from Ron Simmons, Joe Krueger, Jim Donahoe, Pat Sorensen and Vern Kalepp, Ginochio removed the Cat's seat and bolted on a 7-ft. long box with two side benches and a driver's seat.

The back rails and much of the steel to make the welded frame came from 5 old hospital beds. The floor is 3/4-in. plywood, and foam seats are covered with vinyl. Ginochio purchased seatbelts at an aircraft surplus store. They were brand new WWII



Roy Ginochio built this 10-passenger carrier that mounts on back of an old Cat. Carrier consists of a 7-ft. long box with two side benches and a driver's seat. seatbelts still in the box.

"It will seat 10 children or eight adults," Ginochio says. "It seems that adults like riding on it more than the kids."

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