AMERICANA LIBRARY

# FOXFIRE

## Pickling and Preserving

Edited by

FOXFIRE STUDENTS

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The Foxfire Americana Library
Edited by Foxfire Students

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# Table of Contents

## A NOTE ABOUT THE FOXFIRE AMERICANA LIBRARY SERIES

For almost half a century, high school students in the Foxfire program in Rabun County, Georgia, have collected oral histories of their elders from the southern Appalachian region in an attempt to preserve a part of the rapidly vanishing heritage and dialect. The Foxfire Fund, Inc., has brought that philosophy of simple living to millions of readers, starting with the bestselling success of *The Foxfire Book* in the early 1970s. Their series of fifteen books and counting has taught creative self-sufficiency and has preserved the stories, crafts, and customs of the unique Appalachian culture for future generations.

Traditionally, books in the Foxfire series have included a little something for everyone in each and every volume. For the first time ever, through the creation of The Foxfire Americana Library, this forty-five-year collection of knowledge has been organized by subject. Whether down-home recipes or simple tips for both your household and garden, each book holds a wealth of tried-and-true information, all passed down by unforgettable people with unforgettable voices.

# PRESERVING AND COOKING FOOD

"Then y' had some good eatin'."

I make my sauerkraut by the full of the moon because my mother and grandmother made it that way and their mothers before them made it that way." That's what Lizzie Moore told Russell Bauman, a Foxfire student, when he interviewed her. She also told him, "When you learn something in the family, it goes right down the family with you." Lizzie Moore's words, however, don't just apply to sauerkraut. They apply to a whole way of life, one that is disappearing in some places, changing in others, but still occasionally appearing when we least expect it. After having worked with Foxfire for several years, while in high school and now in college, I know that we are trying hard to preserve the old Appalachian customs and ways of life—our heritage. What I didn't realize is that some parts of it are still very much present.

While working on this section, I called my grandmother daily for help in editing the recipes. Not only did she not mind, she was thrilled. She doesn't care how I learn to cook or what my motivations are just as long as I eventually learn. I was proud to announce to my grandmother that I knew how to make sauerkraut and that the recipe I was using was similar to my great-grandmother's.

I was at home one night with my mother, who was trying to teach me how to make slaw. I remembered Lizzie Moore's comments about learning to make sauerkraut from her mother. That's when I realized that this chapter is about family traditions, and one of those traditions is taking the time, each and every day, to sit together over a meal and discuss family life. The importance of dinner cannot be stressed enough. Mealtimes were among the few occasions when the

whole family sat in the same room, did no work, and simply enjoyed each other's company. Important decisions were made as steaming bowls of corn and potatoes were passed around the table. News about engagements and births, local gossip, and news from far away were shared as families gathered together for the evening meal. And when the community lost a member, people gathered at the home of the bereaved family, bringing every kind of good food imaginable so that the family wouldn't have to worry about cooking.

Although our lifestyle is quite different today, the dinner meal is still one of the most important parts of the day. In spite of the fact that meals where the whole family eats at the same table and at the same time now seem to occur less frequently, the times when families do eat together still bear resemblance to those of years ago. Who's getting married, who's having kids, and who's moving in or out of the community are still favorite subjects. Other matters often discussed are who makes better biscuits or when the next fishing trip will be. And neighbors still take food to those who've lost a loved one, knowing that the food is not as important as the concern behind it.

I will be the first to admit that my motivation for putting together this section on recipes was that, first and foremost, I love to eat, and much of what I love to eat is discussed in the following pages.

The words on these pages represent a collection of recipes, hints, and cooking stories, knowledge that has been passed down for generations, mother to daughter (or perhaps father to son), about how to care for a family in the form of fixing them what they like to eat. Here you have time-tested and well-loved recipes from families throughout the region. Many directions are not precise, as the women learned to add "a little bit" of this and "a dab" of that from their mothers, who did it that way because that's the way *their* mothers did it.

*—Lacy Hunter*

## PRESERVING, CANNING, AND PICKLING

Before the era of deep freezes, store-bought fruits and vegetables, and restaurants, not only did people depend on their ability to grow food on the farm, they also depended on saving what they had grown. To provide fruits and vegetables year-round, methods of preservation such as canning and pickling were devised. Even today many families prefer the vegetables they can "put up" themselves to those bought from the store. Thus, canning and making jams and jellies are still late-summer rituals in many families, including my own. Though the actual work is occasionally tedious, the results are always worth the effort.

### PRESERVING FRUIT

Lessie Conner remembered her family's methods for preserving fruits and vegetables. "Before we bought our deep freeze—people ain't had deep freezes so long, you know—in the fall of the year, we'd put up a big barrel of bleached fruit, apples. (Just peel 'em and bleach 'em in sulfur.) We'd have a barrel of bleached fruit, and we'd have a barrel of kraut, and that's the way we spent the winter—with stuff like that to eat."

As Mrs. Conner mentioned, one of the methods of preserving fruit was bleaching it. Several people told us that unless the fruit was prepared with too much water when it was later cooked, they could not taste the sulfur used in the process, and the bleached fruit was actually quite good. As Susie Smith said, "That fruit was just as pretty and white [as it could be]." Her brother Clive Smith also remembers bleached fruits. "My mother, aunts, and sisters would cut up apples to smoke them in the fall. They'd cut 'em up and put 'em in a basket with an iron pan. Then sprinkle a little sulfur in it to preserve

ILLUSTRATION 1 Lessie Conner

the apples. They'd store 'em in a churn. We had fresh fruit all winter. You don't hear of smoked fruit anymore."

Furman Arvey spoke of what his family did with the fruit after it was bleached. "Applesauce and stuff like that, they usually made it out of bleached fruit. They take it and get a big barrel and put a run of that in there, and they'd get sulfur or brimstone—that brimstone was hard, and it'd burn—and they'd cover that [barrel] up and let it smoke. That's what cured it. Turned it real white. And give it a good taste. Then they put it in jars. It stayed soft. It wouldn't dry out. It'd keep. If they wanted to, they could just leave it in the barrel and use it out of the barrel. It'd keep right in that barrel. Be big oal barrels, you know, back then."

Susie Smith graciously gave us specific directions for bleaching apples. She said that the first step is to find an airtight container or box approximately thirty-six inches deep. She remembers her family using an old cement box with a quilt draped over the top of it. They placed a hot stove eye from the top of their wood-stove in the bottom of the box on which they placed one teaspoon of sulfur and one teaspoon of cream of tartar. The sliced

apples should be placed in a basket—she used an old market basket—and suspended from the top of the box and covered with a quilt. The sulfur and cream of tartar will burn on the hot plate, producing smoke, which will, in turn, bleach the fruit. (If the stove plate wasn't hot enough to burn the sulfur and cream of tartar, they were lit with a match to make them burn.) The bleaching process takes about forty-five minutes to one hour.

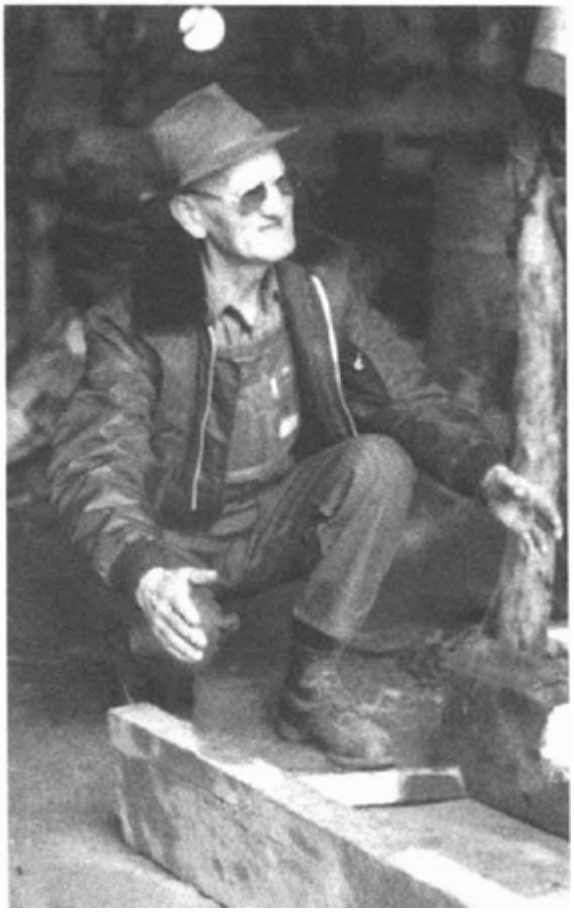

ILLUSTRATION 2 Furman Arvey

**DRYING APPLES**

Another commonly used method of fruit preservation was drying. Ruby Eller recalled how people found a way to make the chore of peeling the apples to be dried a social event. "There were candy drawings, corn shuckings, apple peelings [for social get-togethers]. In the summer when the apples would get ripe, people dried a lot of them. They'd meet at somebody's home one night to peel a bunch of apples and have them ready to set out in the sun to dry the next day. They'd go to a different house each night and help each other."

Lucy York found a slightly more convenient way to dry apples, especially in times of rainy or bad weather. "I would peel my apples and slice them and put them in

ILLUSTRATION 3 Ruby Eller

ILLUSTRATION 4 Lucy York

the oven when I finished cooking a meal. I'd slip the trays in there and leave the oven door open. It would take several days for them to dry because I would leave them in there only until the oven cooled down.

"Now I dry them over my hot water heater because it's a low heat yet it dries the apples out. I can stack three trays of apples up on the heater by putting pieces of wood across and separating the trays."

Lettie Chastain told us how she stores her apples once they are dried. "I've always dried apples out in the sunshine. Then I put them in the stove and heat them, get them hot all the way through. I pack them in gallon jugs while they're real hot, and they just keep real good. We didn't have gallon jugs years back, and we used large crocks."

Furman Arvey summarized the whole process. "We didn't have refrigerators or freezers. Had to dry most of our food to keep it. We had one kiln. That old kiln—I

can't recollect when it was built. The sides were four feet wide by eight feet long by two feet high built of rock. Then there was rock over the top of it. They tried to make it about four inches thick. That's what you laid your fruit on. They didn't burn their fruit that a-way. See, they just got that rock over the top of the fire hot, and it stayed a certain temperature. Then they took flour back then and made a paste out of it and stuck old newspapers—all kinds of papers—to the rock cover. It was clean, you know, about layin' your apple on. I recollect that. Then they'd peel 'em and just cut 'em wide open and quarter 'em, you know, and took the cores out. They'd dry better and dry even that way. It'd take about twenty-four hours to dry a run, and then they'd put a new run in. It wouldn't be over a couple of layers thick on the [furnace]. Stir it up ever' three or four hours. Just go in and stir it, you know.

"Then they'd take it off and put it in sacks, and on them good sunny days, they'd take that sack and lay it out on the porch where the sun could hit it, and they'd go and turn it over ever' once in a while so it'd dry out good, keep good. I seen a room one time—a little old pantry they called it—and I seen it stacked full of sacks of dried fruit."

#### BURYING APPLES, BEETS, CABBAGE, POTATOES, AND TURNIPS

Although drying was a common method of preservation, it was by no means the only one used. Burying fruits and vegetables was both an excellent means of preserving food and a testament to the ingenuity of the mountaineers. In order for the food to keep, the hole had to be well drained and insulated to prevent water accumulation and freezing. Sallie Beaty remembered well her family's potato hole. "Another way we kept our food was by putting it in a hole in the ground. We did our potatoes like this. [After] we dug up

our potatoes in the fall, we would dig a hole [in the ground and put them in it]. We put straw or whatever we could find around them. Then we'd hill them up. [Next we] put dirt on top of them to keep 'em from freezing. Then we took an old piece of board or tin and put over the—we called it a hill—so it wouldn't get so wet. You could do turnips and cabbage the same way. Then, as you wanted a mess, you would go out there and get whatever you wanted at a time."

Ada Kelly also recalled her family's hole. "They'd dig a hole to put the apples in, put some hay, straw, or something in there, and just pour them in that hole. They they covered it over with leaves or straw and then heavy soil. Turnips, apples, and potatoes are all buried that way."

The logical question of how the fruits and vegetables were removed from the hole during the winter was answered by Roberta Hicks. "You would hoe up the potatoes in the garden, then put them in a hole, then put hay in the hole, and place your potatoes in the hole. Then you leave a place to where you can reach in and get them out."

Gertrude Mull also told us about storing fruits and vegetables in this manner. She felt, however, that perhaps due to changing weather patterns, burying fruits and vegetables would not be as effective today as it was years ago. "Back in them days, they just dried fruit and holed up their taters—get 'em off the trees and carry them to the cellar. We packed leaves in there and put the apples down in them. Then we'd cover the apples over with more leaves. They kept all winter. Nowadays they wouldn't keep over a week. They'd be rotten. [Apples] don't keep like they used to. I don't know why. It's just the weather changing."

Mrs. Mull recalled that beets were also stored in a hole before canning became common. "We buried our beets [to keep them through the winter]. We never canned

beets. We didn't know nothing about canning beets then. [When we cooked them,] we fixed them up with a lot of syrup."

ILLUSTRATION 5 Gertrude Mull

In spite of the skepticism about their effectiveness today, holes for fruits and vegetables were an excellent method of preservation, especially in this climate where the winters are cool, but not too cold. As Roberta Hicks noted, the fruits and vegetables "would stay good all winter if it did not get too cold."

#### CANNING

"Back then there wasn't no money, much, and we had to grow what we had to eat. We grew beans, cabbage, tomatoes, everything like that [in our garden]. We canned everything we grew. We dried fruit too. My mother dried blackberries. She just put 'em on a cloth and let 'em dry. After she dried 'em, she cooked 'em with a little water. Then she'd sweeten 'em. You could make pies out of 'em or anything you wanted to. Why, they was good! They aren't as good dried as they was canned, but back then they didn't have too many cans to can in."

ILLUSTRATION 6 “Back then, there wasn’t no money, much, and we had to grow what we had to eat.”—Minnie Dailey

This quote from Minnie Dailey summarizes one of the changes in food preservation that have taken place in the past century in the mountains—the advent of canning. Although definitely one of the better means of keeping food, canning could not be used until glass jars became common and cheap enough for the average family to afford.

By the 1930s, when glass jars became readily available, canning quickly became widespread and is still very common today. Roberta Hicks said, “I grew corn, green beans, taters, okra, and tomatoes in my garden. In those days, you had to can everything. I canned beans in half-gallon jars and jelly in quart jars. I canned a lot of tomatoes. One year I canned a thousand jars. I had eighteen different kinds of jams and jellies. I had seven or eight dozen jars of applesauce, and a hundred and fifty cans of green beans, and about a hundred and something quarts of peaches. We also had cows and pigs. We raised most of our own meat, but I

say most of our food was from things that I had canned."

ILLUSTRATION 7 Lola Cannon

Over the years, the process of canning has changed. Now we have pressure cookers and stove timers to help us can. However, years ago, food had to be canned by the open-kettle method. Lola Cannon said, "I learned to can by the open-kettle method. That was where you cooked your food in an open kettle and had your jars sterilized and standing right there. You put your hot food in the jars and sealed them from the heat in the food. It was hard to keep. You pretty well have to process your jars after they're sealed. Later on, several different types of canners came along. We had a pressure canner."

ILLUSTRATION 8 Bessie Underwood

Bessie Underwood also remembered canning in an open washtub. "I have canned beans on the woodstove in a washtub. I boiled them three hours."

Sallie Beaty gave a detailed account of this method of canning. "[When] we canned our beans, we

would pick them, string them, and then break them up. Then we would cook them outside for three hours in a big old washtub [over a] fire. This would [help the beans] keep [longer]. Most of our vegetables we did like this. We put tomatoes, corn, and okra in our homemade soup. We scalded our tomatoes and pulled the skin off them. Then we cut our corn and our okra up and mixed [the corn, okra, tomatoes, and one teaspoon of salt] up. Then we either cooked it in a hot water bath on top of the stove or outside in a washtub with a fire around it."

These days the process of canning is much simpler, although it still involves hard work, and an afternoon of canning can turn even a well air-conditioned house into a sauna. The method of canning used today that utilizes pressure cookers is much easier than it was years ago. This change can be seen in Gladys Nichols's description of how she cans now. "I boil my tomatoes real good around thirty minutes and put them in a can and seal them. I process the cans about ten to fifteen minutes. I hardly ever lose any canned stuff."

#### PICKLING

Although bleaching, drying, burying, and canning were all excellent methods of preserving food, they did not give much variety to the diet. Another means of keeping food was pickling. Many foods, from beans to beets and cabbage to cucumbers, could be pickled. Not only did pickling preserve the food, it also provided a different taste and texture. Margaret Norton remembered pickled foods. "People grew and preserved everything for the winter to come. They had huge wooden barrels they used for kraut, pickled beans, and different types of pickles. They were all made with salt. They'd keep through the winter. I don't make sour pickles. They don't like me, and I don't like them."

Eva Vinson also recalled pickling as an effective means of food preservation even before canning became

common. “People would think it was funny now to see a fifty- or sixty-gallon barrel of kraut or pickled beans. But they made ’em back then! And they kept all winter. And I don’t know how they did because you can make a churn jar full now and seem like it won’t last. They didn’t put anything but salt [in with it], and as you chop it in the barrel, it makes its own juice. And salt it, you see, to taste—not so it won’t work. It has to work. [Let stand ten days, or as long as needed in order to pickle.] And then they put boards over that. They had ’em special, you know, that they’d had hewed out. Then put rocks on top of [the boards] to hold them down, white flint rocks. They didn’t have any way to can anything.”

## JELLY AND PRESERVES

Making jellies and preserves was yet another way of keeping fruits. Daisy Justice told us, “We canned berries, peaches, and apples. For instance, with blackberries, we’d put them in a big aluminum dishpan, and when they come to a boil, you started dipping them into your jars that you’ve already washed and scalded and sterilized. We’d seal them as we went.”

Sallie Beaty gave specific directions for making jellies and preserves. “[To make our jellies,] we would boil our fruit peelings. We would boil ’em half an hour to one hour and then strain [the] juice out. [We] used [the juice] to make our jelly. [Then] we would use one cup of sugar to one cup of juice and boil it down on top of the stove till it was thick like we wanted it.”

### BLACKBERRY JELLY

1 quart of Blackberries to make 3¾ cups juice

1 box Sure-Jell (or pectin)

4½ cups sugar

Boil blackberries with ½ cup water to make a juice. Mash berries to see when they are done. Strain berries and place juice and Sure-Jell in pot. Stir while cooking. Let boil and then add sugar. Stir and cook until mixture jells.

*—Leona Carver*

### PRESERVES

Lettie Chastain shared her mother’s method for making preserves. “My mother made fruit preserves by putting whatever fruit she was using, pears or figs or whatever, into a pot on the stove. She’d add her sugar and a little water and any spices she might like, and let the mixture

boil while she was cooking breakfast. Then, when she finished the meal and the fire was beginning to go out, she'd cover her pan up. Then the next time she started the fire in the stove up, she'd let the fruit get to boiling again. Sometimes it'd take her a couple of days to get the preserves ready, but they'd sure be good. They were better than any I've ever made."

#### PEAR PRESERVES

Wash pears, peel, and cut into quarters. Rinse and place a layer of sugar and a layer of pears until all the fruit has been used. Let this stand overnight. Put over moderate heat and cook until well done and a syrup has been made from the mixture. Put into sterile jars and seal.

#### MINT JELLY FROM APPLE JUICE

One cup mint leaves (chopped fine and packed tight). Pour boiling water over the clean mint leaves, cover and allow to steep for one hour. Press juice from the leaves and add 2 tablespoons of this extract to 1 cup apple juice and ¾ cup sugar. Boil until jelly test is reached. Add green food coloring. Pour into hot glasses and seal.

#### QUINCE HONEY

1 quart (2 pounds) sugar

1 pint water

3 quinces

Grate quinces. Boil sugar and water and add grated quinces and let boil twenty minutes. Seal in jars. Pear honey is made the same way.

**SORGHUM**

Years ago, when sugar was hard to get, sorghum and honey were often the only sweeteners available to farm families. So, in typical mountain fashion, families grew sorghum cane; usually one or two families in the community had a sorghum mill; and neighbors helped neighbors harvest and produce sorghum, sharing the final product. Minyard Conner remembered fondly the times his family worked together with his neighbor Bill Lamb at sorghum-harvesting time. “We growed sorghum cane here, and [Lessie, his wife] and the young’uns hauled it in a one-horse wagon [over to Bill Lamb’s farm]. Bill had one horse over there, and we’d use his’n when we had to double up. Bill had a big ol’ syrup mill over there, and Lessie and the boys would strip the cane here and carry it over there on our wagon. [They’d help Bill make his syrup, and he’d help them.] We’d get a barrel of syrup, you know. Just living at home, wasn’t we!”

We wanted to mention sorghum because of its importance to the diet of most mountaineers. However, for in-depth information on sorghum making and diagrams, please refer to the last chapter.

## APPLES

Although frequently used in desserts, apples are also cooked and quite often served on the dinner table with the vegetables and meat. The following recipes are just a few of the many ways apples can be prepared to go with a meal.

### APPLESAUCE

Peel your apples but leave the core in them, because there's something around the core that makes the applesauce thicken. Use about 12 apples and cut them up into 4 or 5 pieces each. Put about 1 cup of water in a large pot and put your apples in there. Put them on top of the stove and cook until the apples are done, very soft. Run the apples through an applesauce grinder or ricer. Sugar may be added, but it's not necessary.

—*Margaret Norton*

### COOKED APPLES

Peel and core your apples and slice them. Put them in a pan, add sugar and butter to taste, and cook them until they're tender and the syrup thickens. I usually add cinnamon, but you can add whatever spices suit you. These are good served with baked ham and sauerkraut.

—*Bessie Underwood*

### SCALLOPED APPLES

6 tart cooking apples

¾ cup sugar

⅛ teaspoon cinnamon

Graham crackers to make 1 cup crumbs

Margarine

Water

Pare, core, and slice apples. Mix sugar and cinnamon. Roll out crackers and add sugar-cinnamon mixture. Arrange apples in baking dish in layers, covering each layer with crumbs and dotting with margarine. Add hot water to moisten. Bake in oven at 350˚F for 45 minutes to 1 hour or until apples are well cooked and the crumbs browned.

#### SOFT-BAKED APPLES

Peel and core 12 apples. Cut each into 8 or 10 pieces. Place in a shallow baking pan and sprinkle with sugar. Add a small amount of water and cook on top of the stove until apples are tender. Put the pan inside the oven and bake a while longer.

ILLUSTRATION 9 Addie Norton

Serve the apples as is, although the guests usually will mash them, as they are very soft.

*—Addie Norton*

## VEGETABLES

The following recipes for fresh or canned vegetables come from interviewees who used them to feed their own families for many years. Many of these recipes were passed down from mother to daughter for generations and still frequently grace the kitchen tables of grateful families throughout northeastern Georgia.

### BAKED BEANS

Pick [white half-runner] beans when they turn yellow. Shell them out. Place the beans in a pot and cook in water until they're tender. Drain water and put some onions in them, then add bacon, salt, tomato catsup, and a little vinegar. Pour them into pint canning jars and let them come to a boil, in a pan on the stove, to seal them.

*—Margaret Norton*

### BEETS

Choose small beets and wash them with the skins on. Then cut the tops off, leaving about an inch of the top on the beets so they won't bleed. Then you boil them until they're tender with the skin still on. When they are done boiling, cool and just slip the skins off with your hands and slice the beets up. For buttered beets, add enough water to cover them, salt and butter to taste, and simmer for around 10 minutes. For pickled beets, instead of adding butter and salt, you add, again, enough water to cover them, and then vinegar and sugar to taste, and simmer for 10 minutes.

*—Juanita Kilby*

### CABBAGE

For fried cabbage, you wash and coarsely chop a head of cabbage. Then you cook it in about a cup of salt water with streak o' lean drippings [streak o' lean is pork meat that is salt-cured and has one streak of lean meat running through fat meat] and about a teaspoon of sugar until it is tender.

*—Juanita Kilby*

**CORN**

Select about 6 ripe ears of corn and shuck, wash, and silk them. Then cut the corn off the cob and scrape the cob. Combine this with ½ cup of water and ¼ stick of margarine in a black skillet and cook in the oven, stirring it every now and then. It needs to cook approximately 30 minutes.

*—Juanita Kilby*

**GREEN BEANS**

ILLUSTRATION 10 Bertha Waldroop

Pick the green beans from the garden. Wash them and string them. Put them in a pot and cover them with water. I add Wesson oil, but you can put a piece of fatback [a piece of fat pork meat] in them too. Add salt to taste. Let them cook down until they're tender and almost dry.

*—Bertha Waldroop*

## HOMINY

The various methods of preservation lent different tastes and textures to ordinary garden vegetables. These methods helped women provide many tasty and interesting meals for their families with a small number of vegetable choices.

Certain vegetables seem to have been more versatile than others. Corn, for example, had many uses, from vegetable to meal for bread, from snack to decoration of the family Christmas tree. Another use for corn was making hominy. Served as a starch, hominy is a delicious variation of a very prevalent vegetable in the mountains.

Although the making of hominy is generations old, the method has changed little through the years. In fact, Belle Wilburn Henslee, who learned how to make hominy from her mother, told us, “The process of makin’ it hasn’t changed any except according to what you lye it with. I used soda to lye mine, but old people used to use lye off of ashes, corncob ashes or hickory wood ashes.”

For those who don’t use “bought lye,” making the lye with which to make the hominy is the first step in the process. To make the lye, water is dripped through oak or hickory ashes that have been saved from the fireplace. The ashes are placed in a metal barrel (which may be made of iron, plastic, or porcelain, but not aluminum, as it corrodes in the presence of the lye) with a spouted hole in its bottom. A few gallons of water are slowly poured over the ashes and allowed to drip into another bucket beneath the metal barrel, yielding the lye. The lye-making process should take about two hours.

Once the lye is made, approximately a peck [¼ bushel] of dried corn is shucked, silked, and, according to Mrs. Algie Norton, shelled by hand “so y’ could get all

the sorry grains and things out of it" and placed in a large washpot along with one part lye and two parts water to cook over a fire. After several hours of boiling, the skins and shells of the corn should begin to come off, at which point the pot is taken off the fire, and the corn is removed. The next step is to thoroughly wash the lye off the corn. Belle Henslee stated that "you wash it an' wash it—I don't know, about a dozen times or more!" Mrs. Norton agreed with her, saying that "you'd have t' wash it through maybe a dozen waters and rub it t' get all that skin off."

After being washed to remove all the lye, the corn is placed in a pot and put back on to boil until it is tender. Once the corn is tender, it is ready to be consumed by those eager for the rewards of their hard work, fried with bacon grease, or "put up" by either freezing or canning it. According to Mrs. Norton, once the corn has been cooked, "y' take it out when it's good and tender and done. Then y' had some good eatin'."

ILLUSTRATION 11 Granny Carrie McCurry

Granny Carrie McCurry told us her method of making lye. "For hominy, I always take hickory wood and burn it and take them ashes and put it up and drip the lye to use. Or you can keep the hot ashes and tie 'em up in a rag and do it. Fill your pot with water and put the corn in and the lye in and boil that until the skin [of the corn] comes off, and then you take the corn out and wash it, parboil it, soak it, and

get the lye out of it." If you're doing it with a bag of ashes instead of lye, she adds, just get a handful and tie it up in a rag, stick it down in the pot, and boil it with the corn.

The best place to cook hominy, Mrs. Norton and Belle Henslee agree, is in a big, black iron washpot. Belle Henslee suggests waiting for a clear day in order to get a good fire and to make washing the hominy numerous times much more pleasant. Mrs. Norton added that "y' always make it in the wintertime. Houses were open enough 'til y' had plenty of ice, and anything y' had froze in it. Out somewhere away from the chimney or fireplace, it'd keep for a week."

#### MUSTARD GREENS

Pick a mess of greens and wash them at least 4 or 5 times until the water is clear. Then take out the stem and boil the greens in salt water until they are tender. This takes about 1 hour. Then take them out of the water and place them in a skillet with streak o' lean drippings, add about a teaspoon of sugar, and fry them for about 10 minutes.

—*Juanita Kilby*

#### PARCHING PEANUTS

Preheat your oven to a moderate temperature. Be careful not to let the stove get too hot. Put the raw, dried peanuts in a shallow pan and place in the oven. Test them every few minutes to see if they are parched to your satisfaction. It will usually take 15 to 20 minutes.

—*Ruth Cabe*

#### COOKING PICKLED BEANS

Wash pickled beans once to get the salt and vinegar taste out. Then cook in a small amount of water with 1 tablespoon bacon grease for 15 to 20 minutes, just long enough to heat them throughout and to cook the water out.

ILLUSTRATION 12 Ruth Cabe

*—Lucy York*

**POTATO SALAD**

For 6 to 8 servings of potato salad, peel, wash, and dice 6 Irish potatoes. Then boil and drain them. Add about ¼ cup cubed pickles or relish, a tablespoon of mayonnaise, a teaspoon of mustard, 3 chopped boiled eggs, and salt to taste, and mix.

*—Juanita Kilby*

**RUTABAGAS**

Peel them and slice them, and cook them in salt water to cover with approximately ¼ cup of brown sugar and drippings of streak o' lean. They should be cooked until they are tender and almost dry.

*—Juanita Kilby*

**SAUERKRAUT**

Another vegetable that was transformed by good cooks into many different, tasty dishes is cabbage. Aside from

the obvious slaw and fried or boiled cabbage, sauerkraut is an ingenious way of both preserving an easily grown vegetable and providing more variety at the dinner table.

Lizzie Moore gave Russell Bauman instructions on how she makes sauerkraut—a favorite use of cabbage in northeastern Georgia. “I make my sauerkraut by the full of the moon because my mother and grandmother made it that way, and their mothers before them made it that way. I always make my kraut on the full of the moon ’cause it’s always harder and firmer then than it is at any other time. I like my kraut hard and firm. I don’t like soft kraut. Other people may have different times of the moon when they make theirs—I don’t know about that. As far as my pickled beans and kraut go, I have always made mine on the full of the moon.

“Don’t put the kraut in a tin barrel. Put it in a wooden barrel. A tin barrel’ll rust, and you can’t eat your kraut. To make kraut in the barrel—now, this is an all-day job—you take your cabbage, trim the outside leaves off, and save them for later. Wash and chop up your cabbage in a washtub. I got a number two washtub, and I just wash mine in that. If you want to make chopped kraut, you chop ’em up as fine as you want it. If you want to make shredded kraut, you can just take your cabbage, cut it into quarters, and slice it just as thin as you can make in those little strips—either way. I don’t make the shredded ’cause I like chopped the best. Just take it, chop it up, and put it in your barrel.

“When you get your cabbage chopped up, put it all into that fifty-gallon barrel. Take those green leaves that you trimmed off the outside of your cabbage, wash ’em, and put ’em over the top of your barrel. Just take those leaves and lay ’em agin’ your barrel so that none of your chopped kraut is showing. Get a big ol’ flat rock and lay it down on top of your cabbage. That weights it down. It keeps the cabbage down in the bottom of the barrel

instead of coming up when it starts working. With a fifty-gallon barrel, I'd say you'd have to get two pretty good-sized rocks to go across it and weigh it down. You don't pack it in the barrel. These rocks pack it for you. Pack your cabbage in there 'til it comes up six or eight inches from the top. I forgot how much salt you put into a fifty-gallon barrel, but the way I do when I make it is I'll take my water and taste of it and get it as salty as I want it. Pour your salt water in that barrel and put it away to set for a while.

"It'll take anywhere from two to three weeks for a fifty-gallon barrel of kraut to work off and get sour. After it gets sour, you have to take it out of the barrel. Take your hands and squeeze all of the water out of it and put it in a cooker or a dishpan. Run cold water over it, wash it, and take your hands and squeeze all of the water you can get out of it again. Put it in another pan, put water over the top of it, and put it on the stove. Don't let it come to a boil. Just let it get ready to come to a boil. Stir it so the heat can get all the way through. Pack it in your cans and don't put no more salt or nothin' in it. Pack it in your cans, seal it up, and set it away.

"You can eat kraut with just about anything. You can make kraut with weenies. You can make fried kraut. If you want to, you can always put pepper in your kraut. Now, a lot of people don't like pepper in their kraut. I do, but now, a lot of people don't. I like hot pepper in my cabbage. You can eat it out of the can. I usually just get me some out in a bowl and eat it raw. To me, beef's not good in kraut like pork is. You can also eat kraut with cracklin' bread.

"Another thing you can do with your cabbage is to take your stalks that are left over and pickle them. Take the stalk, peel it off, and drop it down in your kraut. It'll sour and be good too. When you get ready to eat it, put 'em in a pan of grease from bacon or fried meats. If you

ain't got that, just put your Crisco or lard in a pan, let it get hot, and eat it. That's all there is to makin' kraut. Of course, when you're makin' it, it takes longer than it does to tell about it. When you make it in a fifty-gallon barrel, oh, my goodness, that takes fifty pounds of cabbage!"

Lola Cannon told us how she judges the correct amount of salt to put into the barrel of cabbage and how she knows when the kraut is through "making." "I've always judged how much salt to put in by the size of the container I'm using. If it's a gallon container, I put two tablespoons of salt, fill the container with water, and weight the top down carefully. Then I watch till it ferments. You can tell by the bubbles coming up in the jar. The time it takes to ferment depends on the heat. In cool weather, it will take quite a bit of time. I just have to watch it."

#### SQUASH CASSEROLE

ILLUSTRATION 13 Effie Lord

I make a casserole out of squash, and the Florida people say I'm the only person they know that knows how to cook squash to eat. I take real small squash, and I always scrape them and cut them up in thin pieces. I put them in a pan and put onions and crumbled-up Ritz crackers on top. Then sprinkle a tiny bit of water and some grated cheese and dots of butter over the crackers. Then I put aluminum foil over it and put it in the oven to cook.

*—Mrs. Effie Lord, Proprietor of Lord's Cafe, Clayton*

**SWEET POTATOES**

For candied sweet potatoes, I peel and quarter about 4 large sweet potatoes, put them in a pot with enough water to cover them, a cup of sugar, a dash of cinnamon and butter, and I let them boil until they're tender and the juice is syrupy.

—*Bessie Ramey*

**TOMATO SOUP**

For tomato soup, take the juice from 1 quart of home-canned tomatoes. Stir 2 tablespoons flour into a small teacup of milk. Pour tomato juice into the flour-milk mixture and heat. Add ½ teaspoon sugar to taste.

# PRESERVING VEGETABLES

**DRYING**

PUMPKIN—Mrs. Tom Kelly said, “This is a recipe that was used in most families in olden times. You slice th’ pumpkin around in circles, take th’ seeds out, peel it, and hang it on a stick crosswise of th’ joists of th’ house. Let it hang there until it dries. Then store it in sacks. It took a long time to cook, and you have to cook it several hours, and they season it with hog meat and grease.”

SWEET POTATOES—Boil the potatoes until done. Slip off the skins and slice. Put on a clean white cloth and put out in the sun each day. Then stack for winter use in pudding, pie, etc. Some people would just peel and slice without boiling, and set out to dry.

CORN—Corn was cut as if it were going to be cooked (twice around the cob, according to Mrs. Harriet Echols), and then spread out in the sun, sometimes on a piece of tin.

OKRA—Slice okra. Put on a piece of metal which has been covered with brown paper or on a white cloth to keep the okra off the metal or tin sheet being used. Place thinly on the sheet, and put out in the sun. Cover at night. Let dry until ready to take off the paper. Remove and put in bag until desired to use for cooking.

ILLUSTRATION 14 Leather Breeches Beans

LEATHER BREECHES BEANS—String tender green beans. Fill a long needle with a long strong thread. Push the needle through the center of the bean, pushing the beans together at the end of the thread, filling from knot end to needle. Hang up the string by one end in the warm air, but not in direct sunlight. This gives the beans a better flavor. Let them remain hanging until the beans become dry. Store in a bag until ready to use.

PEAS—Pick the peas when ripe, and lay them in the sun to dry. After they are thoroughly dry, place them on a sheet outside on a windy day, and beat the hulls off with a stick. The wind will blow the chaff away and leave just the peas. Store the peas in sacks in a dry place until you're ready to eat them.

#### BURYING

CABBAGE—Dig a shallow circular trench on a gently sloped plot of ground. The diameter of the trench will depend on the number of cabbages you plan to preserve. Also dig a drainage ditch leading downhill and away from the circular trench. This will serve to drain off any surface water that might accumulate and rot the cabbages.

Throw the dirt from the trench into the center of the circle, thus making a low mound. Cover the mound with straw.

Pull up cabbages root and all. Place the cabbages on the mound so that the root of each is covered by the head of another. Then cover with straw and dirt. They'll keep most of the winter.

POTATOES—Dig a hole a foot or two below the frost line. Put in potatoes and cover with straw, and pack dirt over that. Put a piece of tin on that. They'll keep all winter.

#### PICKLING

"Be sure that th' signs are *not* in th' bowels", says Daisy Justice. "When th' moon is new is th' best time to make kraut, pickle beans, corn, or green tomatoes. If th' signs are in th' bowels they will be slimy or soft and not fit to eat. *Do not use iodized salt* for pickling."

SOUR KRAUT—Select firm cabbage heads and chop. Have a clean churn jar (usually five gallon), and pack

the jar with alternating layers of chopped cabbage and a sprinkling of salt (usually a half cup of salt per gallon of cabbage). You need not add water as the cabbage will produce its own.

When the jar is filled, cover the cabbage with a clean white cloth, large cabbage leaves, or a saucer. Then place a flat flint rock or other weight on top of this to hold the cabbage under the brine. Let this stand ten days, or as long as is necessary to get it as sour as you want.

When this is completed, take the kraut out and pack it in canning jars. Then put the jars in a pot of water and bring to a boil to both seal the jars and cook the cabbage.

Old-timers used to leave the cabbage in the churn jars, omitting this last step, but it turns dark. Jars keep it in serving-size portions, and keep it fresh.

Some add a pot of hot pepper to the churn at the beginning of the whole process for additional flavoring.

PICKLED BEANS—String and break green beans. Wash and cook until tender (about one hour). Then wash them again in cold water and pack them tightly in a clean crock jar, again alternating a layer of beans with a sprinkling of salt. When the jar is full, add as much water as necessary to fill the remaining spaces as the beans will not produce enough of their own water like the cabbage. Another way is to fill the churn with beans and then add salty water to fill (one-half cup per gallon of water).

Weight down as before and let stand about ten days or two weeks. There is no need to can the beans as you did the cabbage unless you want to for convenience. Many people just use them directly from the churn. They keep well this way as they have already been cooked.

PICKLED CORN—Shuck and silk corn that is in roasting ear. Boil on cob and then pack in the clean churn jar as before, sprinkling a little salt over the ears as you pack them. Some cut the corn off the cob before pickling, but many prefer to pack the full ears into the churn.

You may also add salty water as before if you prefer this to sprinkling salt over each layer.

Others line the churn jar before packing with a clean white meal sack. Then they tie the sack at the top when the churn is filled.

When the corn is pickled, you can eat it directly off the cob, or cut it off with a knife and fry in bacon grease or butter. No need to can it in order to preserve.

It is also possible to pickle the corn and the beans together in the same churn jar. Most remove the corn from the cob when doing it this way. Then it is served fried in bacon grease or in butter.

PICKLED BEETS—Boil beets six to eight hours until soft, and the skin slips off easily. Drain the water, peel the beets, and cut them into small cubes. Put the beets into a large pot, and for every quart, add a cup each of sugar and vinegar. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring occasionally. Put into cans and seal.

ICICLE PICKLES (*cucumbers, sweet bell peppers, and green tomatoes*)—This is a process that takes fourteen days, but is actually much easier than it sounds.

Select and cut up a peck (eight quarts) of the above, peel and all. Cut cucumbers into six- to eight-inch strips. Leave the tomatoes whole if they are small ones. Put in a crock, and pour boiling water over the top (fill the crock) and a half cup of salt per peck of vegetables. Let this mixture sit for nine days.

At the end of nine days, pour out the liquid, wash the pickles, put them back in the jar, add three tablespoons

of alum (to make them crisp) and fill again with boiling water.

Let this mixture sit for twenty-four hours. Then empty the liquid again, wash the pickles again, and replace them in the jar. Meanwhile, cook the following mixture:

2 quarts vinegar

9 cups sugar

4–5 pieces ginger

1 tablespoon pickling spice

1 tablespoon celery seed

Cook this mixture until it boils, then pour it over the pickles and leave until the same time on the following day. At this time pour the liquid into a container, reboil it, and pour it over the pickles again. Repeat this for four days in a row.

On the fourth day, the pickles are ready to serve. Keep them in the open jar in a cool place, or can them for convenience.

When pickling the above, the old-timers in the area would usually let the pickles sit overnight in a crock in salty water, then remove them the next day, boil them in vinegar, sugar, and spices to suit taste, and can them immediately. Grape leaves were often added while they were sitting overnight in the crock. These had approximately the same effect as the alum.

For spices and added flavor, they used pickling spice, strips of sassafras, and spicewood. These were called *Bread and Butter Pickles.*

#### CHOW CHOW

1 peck green tomatoes

1 peck string beans

¼ peck small white onions

¼ peck green peppers

2 large heads of cabbage

¼ peck red peppers

4 tablespoons white mustard seed

2 ounces white or black cloves

2 ounces celery seeds

2 ounces allspice

1 pound brown sugar

1 box yellow mustard seed

1 ounce tumeric

vinegar

Chop the tomatoes, let them stand overnight in their own juice. Squeeze out the brine. Chop the cabbage, peppers, onions, and beans, mix together, and add the tomatoes and the spices and sugar. Put in a porcelain kettle, cover with vinegar, and boil three hours. When cool, seal in jars.

#### RIPE TOMATO PICKLE

3 pints tomatoes, peeled and chopped

1 cup celery

4 tablespoons chopped red peppers

4 tablespoons chopped onions

2 cups vinegar

4 tablespoons salt

6 tablespoons sugar

6 tablespoons mustard seed

½ teaspoon cloves

½ teaspoon cinnamon

1 teaspoon grated nutmeg

Mix ingredients in order given. Put in stone jar and cover. Allow this uncooked mixture to stand a week before using.

#### GREEN TOMATO PICKLE

8 pounds green tomatoes, chopped fine

4 pounds brown sugar

1 quart vinegar

1 teaspoon mace

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1 teaspoon cloves

Boil tomatoes and sugar for three hours. Add other ingredients and boil fifteen minutes more. Let cool and seal in jars.

#### ICEBERG GREEN TOMATO PICKLE

7 pounds green tomatoes

builders lime

2 pounds sugar

3 pints vinegar

1 teaspoon each of cloves, ginger, allspice, celery seed, mace, and cinnamon.

Soak the tomatoes in a mixture of 1½ cups lime to 1 gallon water, making enough to cover the tomatoes. Drain and soak for four hours in fresh water, changing hourly. Make a syrup of the sugar, vinegar, and spices, and bring to a boil. Pour it over the tomatoes (after the last change of water has been drained off), and let stand overnight. Then boil for one hour and seal in jars.

**WATERMELON PICKLES**

4 pounds watermelon rind

2 quarts cold water

1 tablespoon slaked lime

2 tablespoons whole allspice

2 tablespoons cloves, whole

1 quart cider vinegar

4 pounds sugar

10 two-inch pieces stick cinnamon

Remove all pink pulp from watermelon rind. Peel outside peeling from the rind. Weigh. Cut in 1 inch circles or cubes. Combine cold water and lime. Pour over rind. Let stand one hour. Drain. Cover with fresh cold water. Simmer 1½ hours or until tender. Drain. Tie spices in a cheesecloth. Combine vinegar, 1 quart water, and sugar. Heat until sugar dissolves. Add spice bag and rind; simmer gently two hours. Pack rind in clean hot sterile jars. Fill jars with boiling hot syrup. Seal. Makes about twelve half pints.

**MUSTARD PICKLE**

1 quart cucumbers, chopped fine

1 quart green tomatoes, chopped fine

1 head cabbage, chopped fine

4 sweet peppers, chopped fine

1 cup salt

1 gallon water

6 tablespoons mustard

1 tablespoon tumeric

1 cup flour

2 quarts vinegar

Make a brine of the salt and water, and let the first four ingredients stand in it for twenty-four hours. Drain. Make a mixture of the last four ingredients, add to the first mixture, and cook for three minutes. Seal in jars.

#### PEAR RELISH

1 peck pears

6 large onions

4 red bell peppers

2 pounds sugar

1 tablespoon allspice

5 cups vinegar

Grind up vegetables in a food chopper. Add vinegar and sugar, and cook for thirty minutes. Seal in jars.

#### CUCUMBER RELISH

12 cucumbers

4 green peppers

4 onions

½ cup salt

vinegar

1 cup sugar

1 teaspoon celery seed

1 tablespoon mustard seed

1 cup grated horse radish

Remove the seeds and skin from the cucumbers and chop. Also chop peppers and onions. Add salt, mix well, and let stand overnight. Drain, add other ingredients,

and mix with enough vinegar to have moisture but not watery. Seal in jars.

#### TOMATO CATSUP

Tomatoes, enough to make a gallon when cooked

½ cup sugar

2 tablespoons ground mustard

1 tablespoon ground allspice

1 pint cider vinegar

3 tablespoons salt

1 tablespoon black pepper

½ tablespoon ground cloves

Select good, firm ripe tomatoes. Scald and strain through a coarse sieve to remove seed and skin. When cold, add to each gallon of tomatoes the above ingredients. Let simmer slowly for three hours. Seal in bottles or jars.

# PRESERVING FRUIT

### BLEACHING

❖MRS. TOM KELLY: “Peel and core apples; cut into quarters or eighths. Fill a ten gallon wooden tub with sliced apples; then put two tablespoons of sulfur in a saucer and strike a match and set th’ sulfur on fire. Cover th’ tub with a clean cloth and let it stay all day. At night, take th’ sulfur saucer out. Repeat the process for three days. Then transfer th’ apples to large jars and tie clean cloths over them. You could eat that any time in th’ year or winter without any preservation.

“Everbody nearly bleached fruits. And it was th’ sulfur that whited th’ apples, and they had a little sulfur flavor. But most of th’ people had a big tub of that made every year.”

❖MRS. CARRIE DILLARD GARRISON: “Another way we had of preserving fruits was to burn coals until there wasn’t any smoke, any fumes, or anything from it—hickory coals usually. Hickory coals would hold th’ heat longer and stay alive longer, so we’d put those under a barrel [in the bottom of a barrel]; and then we’d have our fruit cut in small pieces, and put it in an open basket. We used split baskets, y’know, made out a’oak splits, and we’d put th’ fruit in that and hang it in th’ top a’th’ barrel. But we’d sprinkle our sulfur over th’ coals first; then we’d hang th’ fruit in th’ barrel, and then we’d cover th’ fruit with a old sheet or somethin’ to hold th’ fumes in there, and let it stay in there about twenty, thirty minutes. Then we’d take it out and pack it in a wooden barrel usually. We didn’t have churns or anything like that to put it in. They were scarce. So we’d pack ours in a wooden barrel we’d made—a homemade barrel—and we’d fix a barrel full of each fruit, and they

wouldn’t any insects or anything bother it. All y’had to do was keep it covered tight—keep things out of it, like mice and things like that.

“We’d make pies; cook it for breakfast. Or it just taste like fresh apples. It’d be white though—th’ apples’d be white. It’d take all th’ color out of them.”

✤MRS. ALGIE NORTON: “You’d take a box about two foot high and about two foot wide—a wooden box. Then y’put’cha somethin’ to hold your fruit up about six inches from th’ bottom; y’put’cha somethin’ that ya’ can put’cha some coals in—not blazin’, but burnt coals. And y’have to pare your apples and peel them and core them —cut’em in about eight pieces to the apple. And y’gotta have some kind of a rack—course now y’use a screen wire to go over a little frame with about an inch or two sides around it. And put your screen over th’ bottom and put’cher apples in that.

“And y’have your live coals and put about two heapin’ spoonfuls of sulfur in amon’ th’ coals, and it blazes up for a minute. An’ set your apples down, an’ cover your box good, but you wanta paste that box with paper or somethin’ so that no air can escape. An’ cover it up an’ let it set about thirty minutes an’ put in more sulfur—an’ do that for two or three times.

“Then y’take ya’apples out’n pack’m in jars and put a cover over, an’ they’ll keep til spring.”

Later, Mrs. Norton added that if screen was not available, a person might use the same short-sided wooden box, but mount a slat bottom in it rather than a screen one. The bottom might even be a solid piece with holes bored in it—anything so that the fumes from the sulfur could get to the fruit. She also warned that the fruit must be stirred each time fresh sulfur was added, and that a quilt could be used to cover the box if one wished.

Mrs. Gatha Nichols added one twist to bleaching fruit for the person who wants to do it only on a small scale. For this person, she recommends the use of a churn, a teacup with sulfur and a single coal, and a cloth to cover the churn with.

#### DRYING

We have been fascinated by the sight of trays of sliced fruit drying in front of a fireplace. At one time this was an extremely common way of preserving foods for the winter. Now, although it is no longer a necessity, some mountain people continue the habit. Mrs. Grover Bradley, who had both a churn *and* several trays of sliced apples warming beside her fireplace when we last visited with her, said, "We *had* to eat things like that. They wadn't no other way to live. We dried everything."

APPLES—Apples are either sliced up into thin slivers, or cored and sliced into rings. One woman claimed that with a peeler, she could core, peel, and slice a bushel of apples in fifty-four minutes.

The rings were strung on a broomstick or a pole; slices were spread out on boards. Then they were set out in the sun or in front of the fireplace, depending on the weather, until the slices were brown and rubbery. This usually took two to three days. Some people say that they brought the fruit in at night to protect it from the dampness. Others simply covered the fruit with canvas at night. While drying, it was turned over frequently so that it would dry evenly.

One woman used to heat the dried slices in the oven for a few minutes at 225° to kill any germs. Other just packed them without heating. When dry, the apples were usually taken up and stored in sacks for use during the winter.

As Mrs. Grover Bradley said, "That makes th' best fried pies I ever eat."

*Peaches* were dried just like apples. Small berries such as *blackberries* were simply spread out on boards to dry and were not sliced.

#### USING SYRUP

CROCK GRAPES—Collect dry, sound fox grapes. Pack them in a churn and pour boiling hot fresh molasses or syrup over them. Take two clean cloths; dip the first in hot beeswax and the second in hot tallow, and tie each cloth separately around the top of the churn.

Make this in the fall when the grapes are fresh and ripe. Then set the churn in a cool place until winter. They can be eaten during the winter after they are mildly fermented.

## APPLE BUTTER

I've eaten apple butter all my life. Both my grandmother and mother have made it, but I had never seen it made in a brass kettle until I went to Rogersville, Tennessee. We were very lucky to find Mr. and Mrs. Pat Brooks, their family and grandchildren, who still make it the old-time way.

"Back years ago, you either made it or you didn't eat it. This day and time everybody has got enough money. They don't have to work like us poor folks. Nobody wants to take the time to make it, but they've all got their hand out for a jar."

Pat was humorous and fun to be with. "Well, Honey, I'm going to tell you something. My daddy was this way [humorous] and I ain't never seen a stranger in my life. Just enjoy your life, for when you're dead, you can't."

Obviously he lives by his word. "I have fun everywhere I go. That's what we're here for."

I remember when I was left in charge of the tape recorder, Pat asked me, "You got your tape recorder on? You want to give me some sugar!" Pat just naturally does things like that.

As we were pouring the apple sauce into the brass kettle to cook, he told us about a trick he pulled on his wife. "Now I've got to tell you about my wife when she put on her first pair of shorts. She came outside and when she did, I just wheeled my chair around in front of the door. Here come these people down the road in a car. She was just a'jerking me trying to get in the house, so in order for them to see her [wearing shorts], I just screamed and hollered like I was dying, so they would look. And she said, 'I'll never put the dern things on again, I bet you.' "

We were taking turns at stirring the apple butter when he brought out a rolling pin that belonged to his grandmother. “I’d like to sell this rolling pin. We’re going to have a little auction. What do you bid?”

ILLUSTRATION 15 The apples must first be washed and peeled.

Bids started at five cents and ended with $4.75.

… going once, going twice, gone—sold to Laurie.

Later he told his wife, “We had a sale here a while ago—a rolling pin. I got three neck hugs, four squeezes and nine kisses with it.”

After the first stir came off the fire, everyone was sampling the product with hot, homemade biscuits. Meanwhile, Pat had gone in the house and brought out his banjo and was making a deal with Barbara and Mary to buck dance. We had our own little outdoor concert. He sang a couple of songs, gave us each some apple butter, and we were on our way back home.

VIVIAN BURRELL

The making of apple butter was once a quite common event. We talked to a number of people about it, and we found that, in addition to the Brooks method (illustrated in this chapter), there were many variations.

Pauline Henson and Mrs. Charlie Ross Hartley of Vilas, North Carolina, for example, used molasses instead of sugar. Here's their recipe:

> Wash, slice, core and peel the required number of apples. Put a little water in the brass kettle first and heat, and then add the slices of apple filling the kettle nearly full. Cook them down, and stir them to prevent sticking. After they are cooked down, add molasses to thicken. The molasses is added after the apples are cooked down to keep the butter from being lumpy.
>
> Just before it's done, add sticks of cinnamon to taste. Then, when it's so thick you can almost cut it with a knife, put it up in half gallon or gallon crocks; place a cloth over the top, and seal the crocks with paraffin.

ILLUSTRATION 16 The apples are cooked on a stove for fifteen to twenty minutes, then run through a colander.

They can also remember apple butter being made in the molasses boiler during the last runs to get rid of the extra apples and keep them from going to waste.

Aunt Arie made hers in an iron washpot instead of a brass kettle, as she never had one of the latter. She told us:

“We always had so many good apples. See, we had an apple orchard there at home. We had hundreds of bushels of apples, till it come that storm and blowed the trees all up and Ulysses never did set’em back out. The few trees that were left made up more than we could use and he got old and crippled on both sides, couldn’t dig much. And you can’t hire people to do what you want done. You just have to do what you can do. Of course, we had plenty of apples. We’ve done away with three hundred bushels in one year. I tell you, I got so tired of picking up apples and carrying them to the house and giving them to everybody in Georgia and everywhere else, till I was glad when they were gone! Now that’s the truth. Of course, I was stout then and could do it, but you done so much of it, you got tired of it. What I mean, you got give out of it—I’ll put it that way. Your strength give out.

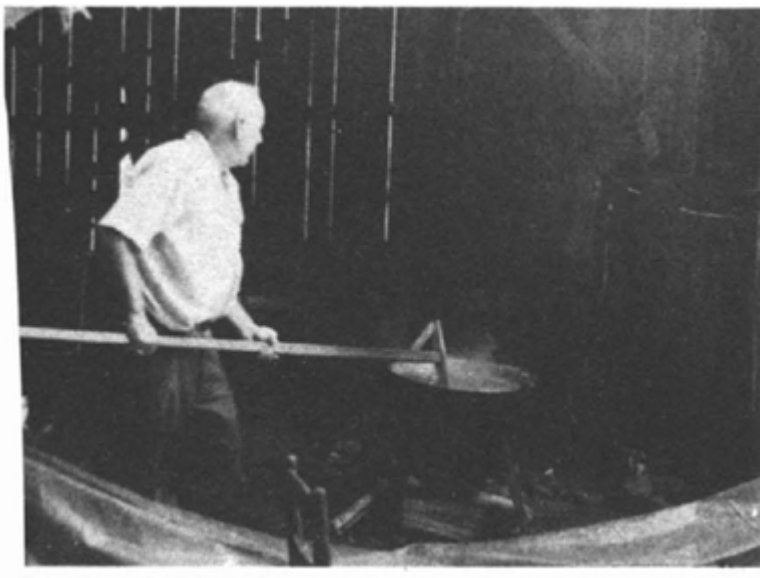

ILLUSTRATION 17 The applesauce is poured into a twenty-gallon brass kettle heated by an open fire. (The kettle must be cleaned with a solution of vinegar and baking soda prior to use.) Mrs. Brooks said, “Brass is the only kind [of kettle] I would have. It just makes better butter somehow. I don’t like a copper kettle because it makes the butter taste, I think.”

Pat told us, “You can use any kind of wood for the fire except pine. [Pine would make the butter taste.] Don’t let the wood touch the bottom of the kettle or the butter will burn.”

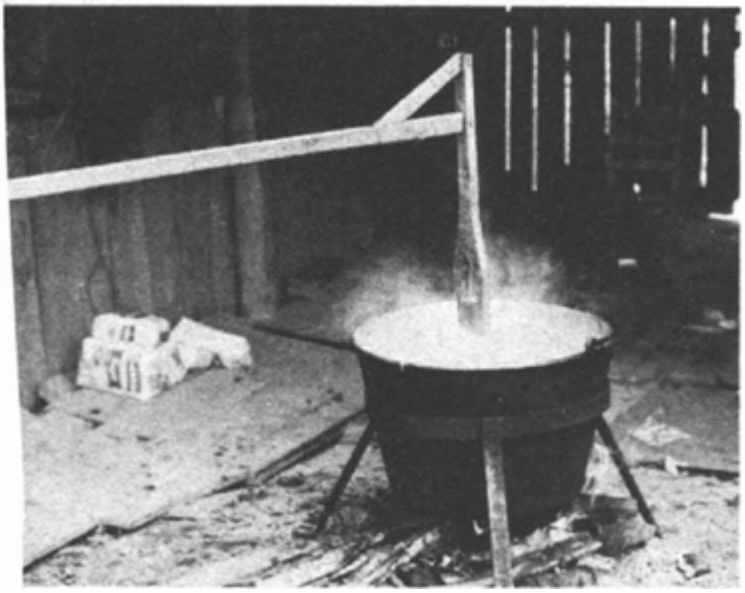

ILLUSTRATION 18 Pat made the butter-stirring stick himself out of cypress. Wood with acid in it can’t be used because it will impart a taste. He likes yellow poplar the best.

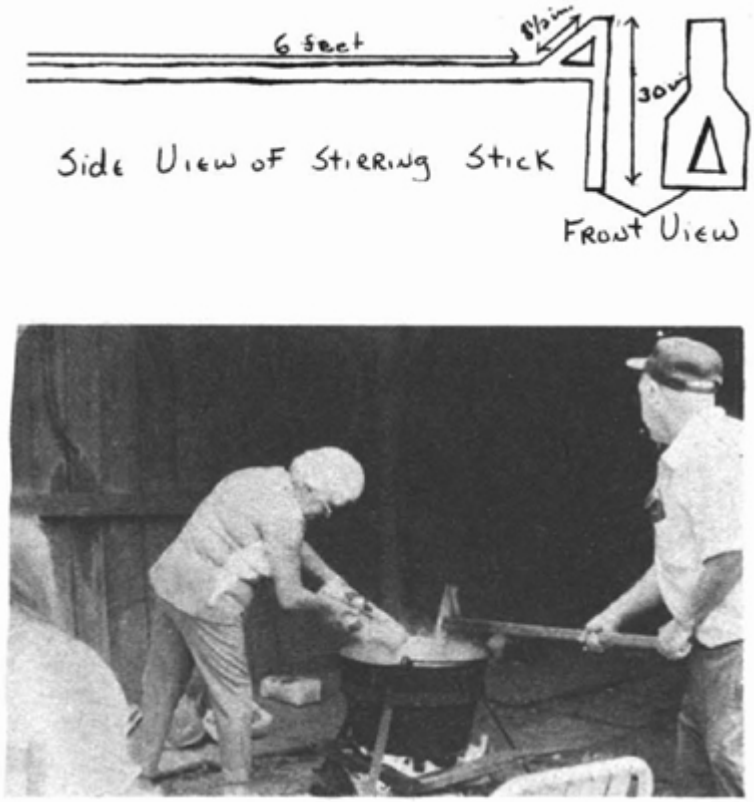


ILLUSTRATION 19 (*Top*) Pat’s stirring stick. (*Bottom*) The applesauce is constantly stirred until it’s hot enough to melt sugar. Then, using one five-

pound bag at a time at regular intervals, fifty pounds of sugar are poured in. The mixture must cook for about two hours, stirring it constantly.

“When you stir, you go once on one side, once on the other side, and once in the middle. You see, the bottom is narrow, and that way it won’t stick.”

ILLUSTRATION 20 As the apple butter cooks, Pat brings out his banjo to liven up the proceedings.

ILLUSTRATION 21 After two hours' cooking, the mixture is taken off the fire, and 4¼ fluid ounces of imitation oil of cinnamon (used by the Brooks) or other desired flavor is added.

"Use good ripe, soft apples. Peel the apples and cut them up—not too fine. Add just enough water to prevent the apples from sticking while they cook. When the apples begin cooking good, mash them with a potato masher as fine as possible. Make the apple butter thick. Then add lots of sorghum to it for sweetening (if you don't, it'll sour). If you don't get the apple butter good and thick, and boil it down good, a five-gallon jarful will sour. Add ground cinnamon for flavoring. If you can't get cinnamon, use lemon.

"To store it, use five six-gallon crocks; tie the tops with cloth, then cover with paper and tie with string. When we wanted apple butter, we opened a crock and got out a bowlful, ate it, and went back for more.

"Lord, they loved apple butter at my house, mercy alive. See, there was so many boys and you know what boys will do. And Papa loved it! I can eat apple butter, but I never did love it like they did."

The Brooks family has been making apple butter every year for over forty years.

It takes three bushels of apples to make a stir. You can keep the apples for three or four days before using them in the apple butter. Mrs. Brooks explains, “I wouldn’t have nothing but the Winesaps. That’s the only kind that makes good butter. The other kind won’t cook up good. Sour apples do. An apple that has a sweet taste to it [won’t] make good butter.”

Mrs. Brooks says, “Sometimes [we sell it], but most of the time we keep it. The family likes it. They must; every time I turn around they’re asking for some.”

I understand!

Aunt Arie also told us of other recipes that were brought to mind when we asked her about apple butter. “Now another thing that really I like a little better in one way is apple preserves. You make preserves out of the kind of apples that don’t cook all to pieces—that stay whole.

“You peel the apples and cut them up into little pieces —they don’t cook up. Put cinnamon or whatever you want to flavor them with. We put them in big old jars and tied them up. People don’t can stuff now like they did then. Of course, if I was to make apple butter now, I’d want to put it in smaller jars and seal them up. And then eat it. You’d have it good all the time. Apple preserves are good!

“I’ve helped make gallons of apple cider. You have to have a cider mill to grind up your apples most of the time. Squeeze that all out and put it up. It’s hard to make. I don’t like apple cider much. Boys, they loved it at home, though. We’d make it by the gallons. We’d fix the apples and put them in a big old wooden trough. We’d take a maul and beat up them apples and make cider out of them. They’d strain the cider out and put it in jugs or whatever they wanted to keep it in. How they did love it! Especially when it’s sharp, as they called it.

They left it till some of it commenced to sour just a little [and then they really enjoyed it.]

ILLUSTRATION 22 The apple butter is now done and ready to be poured into jars. Each stir (three bushels of apples) yields about seventy-five jars.

ILLUSTRATION 23 "It's s'good that if you put some on your forehead, your tongue would slap your brains out trying t'get to it!" PAT BROOKS.

"You make pumpkin butter like you do apple butter. Cut the pumpkin up and peel it and cook that good. Then just mash it up and put sugar and flavoring in. That's all you have to do. We always made ours with cinnamon, and how good it was! Really pumpkin butter

is easier to make than apple butter. We grew as high as a hundred big pumpkins in one year. We'd make it up to last a year and eat it every bit up before spring. We'd have to make a'many a gallon to have enough to do us a year, 'cause we loved it. Then there was so many of us. You take a houseful of boys—they eat something!"

## SORGHUM

At one time, syrup made from juice crushed out of sorghum cane was highly prized as a sugar substitute and sweetener. In some communities, aside from honey, it was the only sweet substance available, as sugar cost money, and money was the rarest commodity of all.

Some families in the mountains still produce sorghum (or molasses) for their own use, but the method of production, in most cases, has undergone some refinements. Nowadays, the mills that are used to crush the juice out of the cane are, more often than not, run by a gasoline engine or a belt connected to the power take-off of a tractor. Years ago, the rollers of the mill were turned by a horse or mule. The animal was hitched to the end of a long rein pole or "sweep." A rod mounted horizontally in, and at right angles to, the butt end of the sweep was tied to a line that went to the horse's halter so that as the horse pulled the lead end of the sweep forward, the line connected to the butt end would keep him pulling himself around in a never-ending circle (see *Illustration 24* and *25*). The sweep turned a crusher roller in the mill, which in turn engaged a second (and sometimes a third) roller, forcing it to turn also. The cane was fed in between the rollers and crushed dry of its juice.

Since few people could afford these mills, it was common that men who owned one would move them from settlement to settlement, grinding and making the syrup for everyone in the area. In return, they were given a "toll"—usually every fourth gallon—in payment. Those who had helped the farmer harvest his cane were also paid in syrup. Making it was a long, slow process,

however. Many mills could only turn out about sixteen gallons a day.

Today, those who grow sorghum grow it in much the same way as their families did before the turn of the century. In early April, the ground is plowed and readied for planting the patch. Noel Moore claims that the soil the cane is planted in makes a big difference in the final product: gray soil for light, thin syrup; and red clay for thick, clear syrup. The seeds, which were saved from the crop the year before, are planted sometime between the middle of May and the first of July (often when the moon is in its growing phase, according to Noel Moore) so that it will be ready for harvest in mid-September—after the corn and before the first frost. It is planted in hills approximately a foot apart and with seven to twelve seeds per hill.

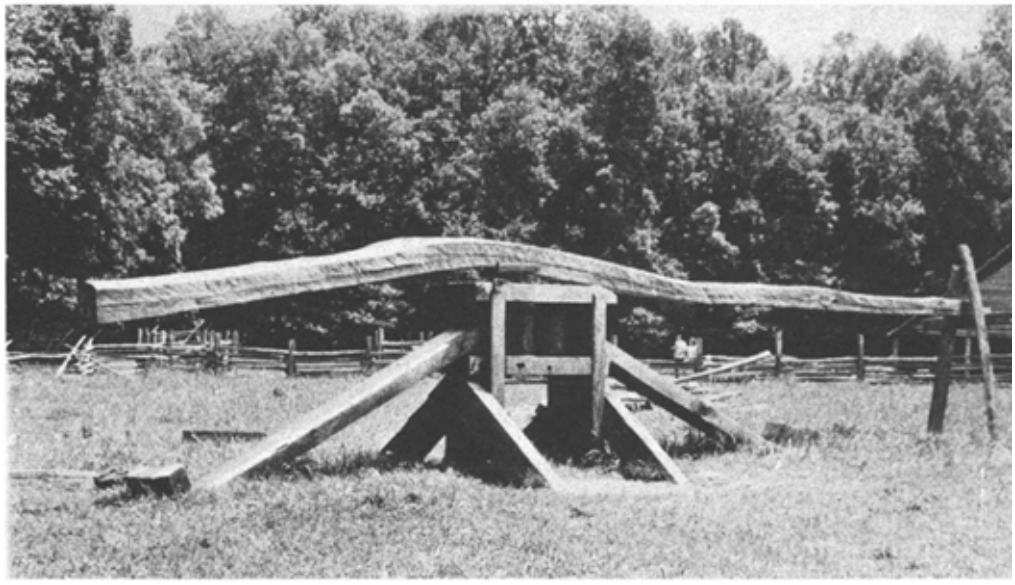

ILLUSTRATION 24 A horse-operated sorghum mill in the reconstructed pioneer settlement at the Cherokee, North Carolina, entrance to the Smokies.

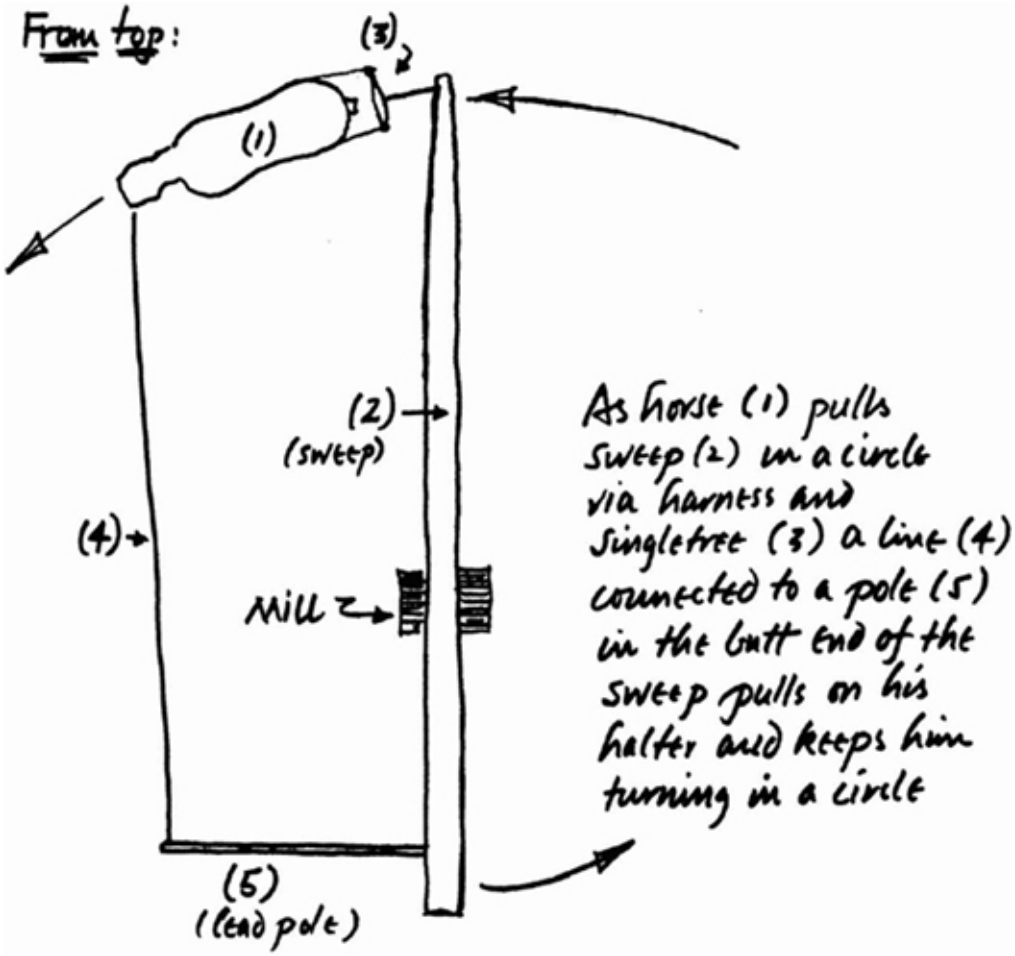


ILLUSTRATION 25

When the stalks are up, the farmer cultivates the rows and thins the number of stalks per hill to five to prevent the cane from growing too tall and thin, thus making the juice watery for lack of enough sun.

All through the summer months, the cane grows. It is ready to be harvested when the seeds turn red and hard. Hopefully, this will be before the first frost, for even though the frost won't necessarily destroy the crop, cold weather makes the plant turn tough and the leaves become harder to strip off. If wind, rain, or other bad weather knocks the stalks down before harvesting, some farmers just give the crop up and plow it under. Others, like Burnett Brooks, try to use it anyway.

At harvest time, the family goes through the field stripping off the stalks' leaves and cutting off the heads (the large red seed pods at the tops of the stalks). The

leaves can be mixed with the cornstalks and used as silage. Some of the heads are saved for next year's seed, and the rest are fed to the chickens or put out for the birds.

This job done, the farmer cuts the stripped cane stalks off at the base, using a sharp hoe or mowing blade, and stacks them in piles to be picked up immediately by horse and wagon, or tractor and wagon. The stalks are rarely left for long after they've been cut, as they will dry out in a matter of a very few days. Also, the cut ends can start to rot, souring the juice and ruining it. The stalks are taken to the mill as quickly as possible for crushing.

This fall, we were lucky enough to find one family producing sorghum for themselves in the most traditional way of all. Tim DeBord and Shanon Jackson drove up with Margie to cover it.

After a short winding drive up a narrow, black-top road, we found the Brooks family hard at work making sorghum syrup. As we stepped out of the Blazer, we were greeted by a bunch of people—mostly kids.

They had saved a dozen or so stalks of cane and left Roxy, the nine year old horse, hitched up just to show us how the process of grinding the sorghum cane is done. The grinding had started at five that morning when one of their relatives, Lowell Buchanan, got up, hitched up the horse, and sat down in the dark to grind cane. Some people would think that's a lot to ask but this man was not asked; he volunteered.

ILLUSTRATION 26 The cane is stripped and the tops removed. It is now ready to be ground by the mill.

ILLUSTRATION 27 Some of the sorghum seed tops are saved to start for the following year's crop.

When we asked about another type of furnace, this same man loaded two of us in his jeep and took us several miles up the road just to show us one. On the way, he told us some good hunting stories.

Mr. Burnett Brooks was the owner of the furnace and boiler-box he built in 1969. When people stopped by to see how it was going, Mr. Brooks was always there to say hello, and found time to talk about groundhog hunting or bear season. People were just dropping in constantly. One man came by and skimmed the boiling juice for an hour and then left. He was “just a friend.” Another friend, Robert Sutton, came by and stayed all day—just helping out.

Mr. Brooks made small paddle-spoons to scrape down the sorghum from the bottom of the boiler. These were about eight inches long and made of wood. They were given to the children when the sorghum was finished, and were good for getting a sample of sorghum. We found the kids getting ahead of the rest of us—they would slip their spoons into the sorghum while it was still boiling hot. They thought it was good—hot or not. And Mr. Brooks had just as much fun as the kids did.

As the morning passed, the amount of boiling juice in the box diminished. We were invited to lunch at a table loaded with food—green beans, chicken, corn relish, creamed corn, pickles, potatoes, fresh garden tomatoes, light bread, and sweet milk. We were given plates and filed by the table filling them with a taste of everything —then headed for the back porch shade. We all sat on the cracked edge of the cool, moist back porch. As one of us was about to take a big bite of crisp chicken, Mr. Brooks said, “Yeah, I pinched the head off that ol’ rooster this morning.”

We changed the subject and got him to talk about sorghum. He explained the whole process to us.

When the cane is harvested, the mill is oiled and the wood gathered to make ready for the cane-grinding. The Brooks have two wooden barrels, one thirty-gallon and one fifty-five-gallon, to be used for collection of the cane juice. A few days before the grinding, the barrels are filled with water so that the staves will swell making the

barrels water-tight. Poplar and oak wood are used for the fire under the boiler. By the time the juice is prepared and added to the boiler, the fire has burned down to a bed of coals. Then more wood is added to bring the temperature of the boiler up, or the fire is doused with water to cool the boiler when the juice is boiling too vigorously.

Mr. Brooks has a three-roller mill. One of the rollers is stationary, the second is set at one-eighth inch, and the third at one-sixteenth inch from the stationary roller (*Illustration 28*). As the horse turns the mill, the sorghum is fed into one side of the mill. The bright green juice drops into a trough and down to a burlap-covered barrel. It is then taken to the boiler where it is poured through several layers of cheesecloth into the boiler. The boiler is filled to within two inches of the top for each batch. No more juice is added after that until that batch is completely cooked down and poured into containers for storage.

ILLUSTRATION 28 Mr. Brooks's mill has three rollers (one is concealed in this photo).

When the juice begins to boil, a dark foam forms on the top. A handmade tool called a skimmer is then used. The skimmer is an eight-and-one-half-inch-square piece

of metal attached to a broom handle. It is perforated so that the juice will run out and leave the foam on the skimmer. The skimmings are discarded into a hole nearby and later the hole covered with dirt. Usually the dogs get to the skimmings before they are covered and really enjoy this treat. We have been told that the skimmings were used at one time to help sweeten moonshine.

The juice has to boil for three to four hours. It is kept at a rolling boil by controlling the heat of the fire as mentioned. The boiler-box holds about eighty gallons. From this eighty gallons of juice come eight to ten gallons of syrup. The juice turns from bright green to a rich caramel color as it is cooked and thickens. When the syrup has cooked long enough, the boiler is lifted from the firebox and placed onto two logs, so that one end of the boiler can be tilted up and the syrup scraped to the other end with a long wooden paddle, about two feet long and flat on one end, made by Mr. Brooks. It is then dipped out of the trough with a small boiler (or saucepan) and poured through several layers of cheesecloth into five-gallon lard cans. After it cools, it is stored in smaller containers—quart jars or gallon cans.

After all the sorghum is finished, and all the syrup cooked and poured into containers, the boiler-box is washed thoroughly and mutton tallow is spread on it to keep it from rusting. After the tallow hardens, the boiler is stored upside down in a shed or barn. The barrels are washed and dried and stored away. The boom pole, which is attached to the mill, and the lead pole, which is attached to the boom pole, are taken down and stored until next year. The mill is covered with a tarpaulin and left for the kids to play on.

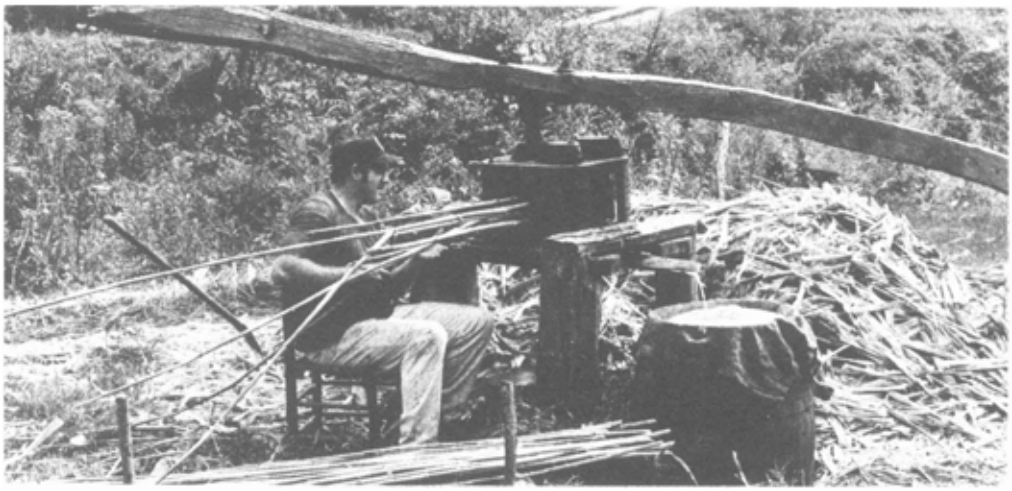

ILLUSTRATION 29 As the horse turns the mill (*top*), cane is fed through it, several stalks at a time (*bottom*).

ILLUSTRATION 30 The mill pulverizes the cane, leaving it dry and flaky on the inside. The pulpy ground cane will be spread on fields as mulch. The extracted juice runs into a burlap-covered barrel.

ILLUSTRATION 31 The burlap bag spread over the barrel serves as a strainer. This is the first of three strainings during the entire sorghum-making process.

ILLUSTRATION 32 The furnace is prepared for lighting (*top*). More wood is added to the furnace (*bottom*).

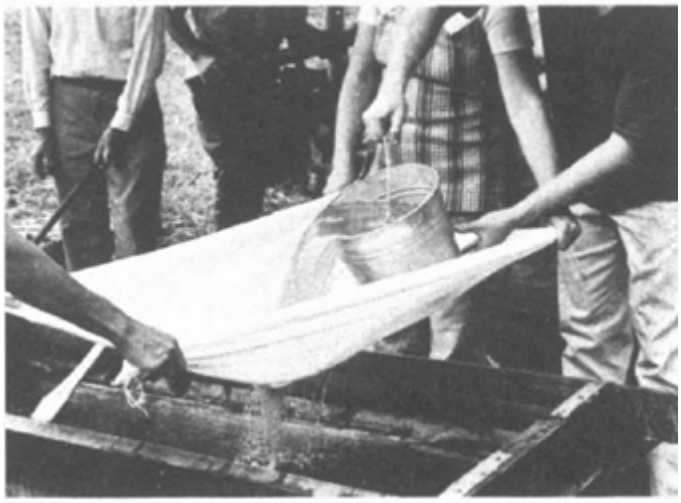

ILLUSTRATION 33 The juice is poured through a cloth (strainer) into the trough, or boile-box (*top*), until it is filled to within two inches of the top (*bottom*).

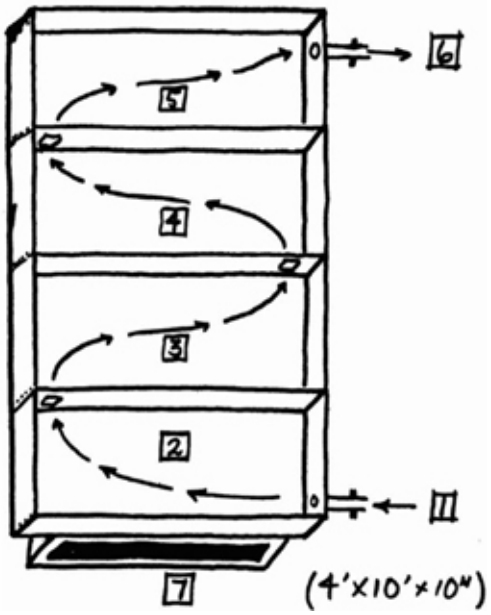


ILLUSTRATION 34 The juice is brought to a boil. Some evaporators are slightly different than the Brooks's (*top*). Another example is shown as a diagram; numbers 1 through 6 indicate the sequence of the flow of the juice, number 7 refers to the boiler (*bottom*).

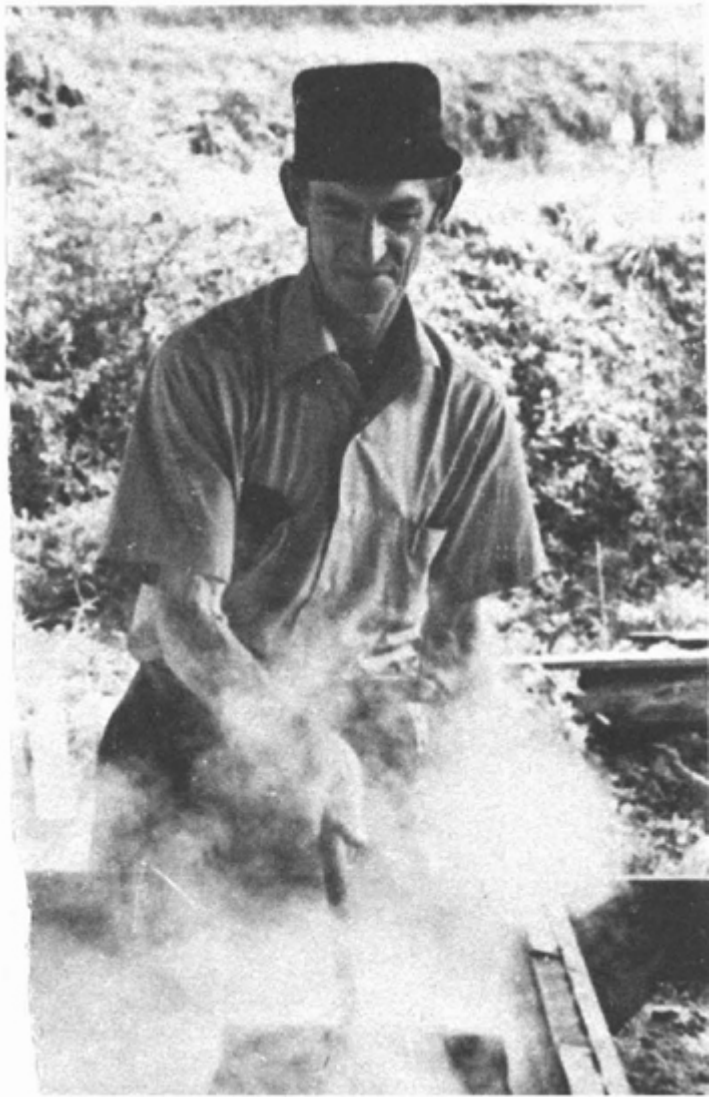

ILLUSTRATION 35 Robert Sutton skims the foam off the boiling juice.

Some evaporators are slightly different from the Brooks's. One variety is shown in *Illustration 34*. The syrup enters from the storage barrel at (1) through a valve that allows the operator to admit it at a controlled rate. The evaporator is tilted slightly (the exit end is about ⅜ of an inch higher than the entrance end) and gates in the bars which divide it into sections allow the syrup to pass from one compartment into another. The arrows show the direction of flow of the boiling syrup which is slowly forced to the higher end by the pressure of the incoming syrup and the heat.

The cane juice is heated to the boiling point in the first two compartments (2) and (3). In the third

compartment, the impurities left in the juice are forced to the surface where they are skimmed off by a man with a wooden strainer-paddle that has a long wooden handle.

In the fourth compartment (5) the juice is brought to the proper thickness for syrup. A cut-off gate at the entrance to this compartment allows the operator to admit the juice at a controlled rate. The syrup is ready to be drawn off (6) when the bubbles that rise from the bottom are about two inches in diameter and burst in the middle. If the bubbles are tiny, the syrup is still not ready to be released.

Ready syrup is drained off at (6). It proceeds down a trough, through another strainer, and then into the clay jugs that were used to store it for use during the winter.

Often the skimmings would be saved, boiled separately, and then worked into candy at a “candy pulling” which was one of the social events most looked forward to in the fall. “The candy,” said Bill Lamb, “tasted *pretty* well, but mostly people came for the fun of it.”

ILLUSTRATION 36 Mrs. Brooks holds the skimmer. Note the holes in its bottom —juice runs through them but foam doesn't.

ILLUSTRATION 37 The boiler-box is removed from the furnace.

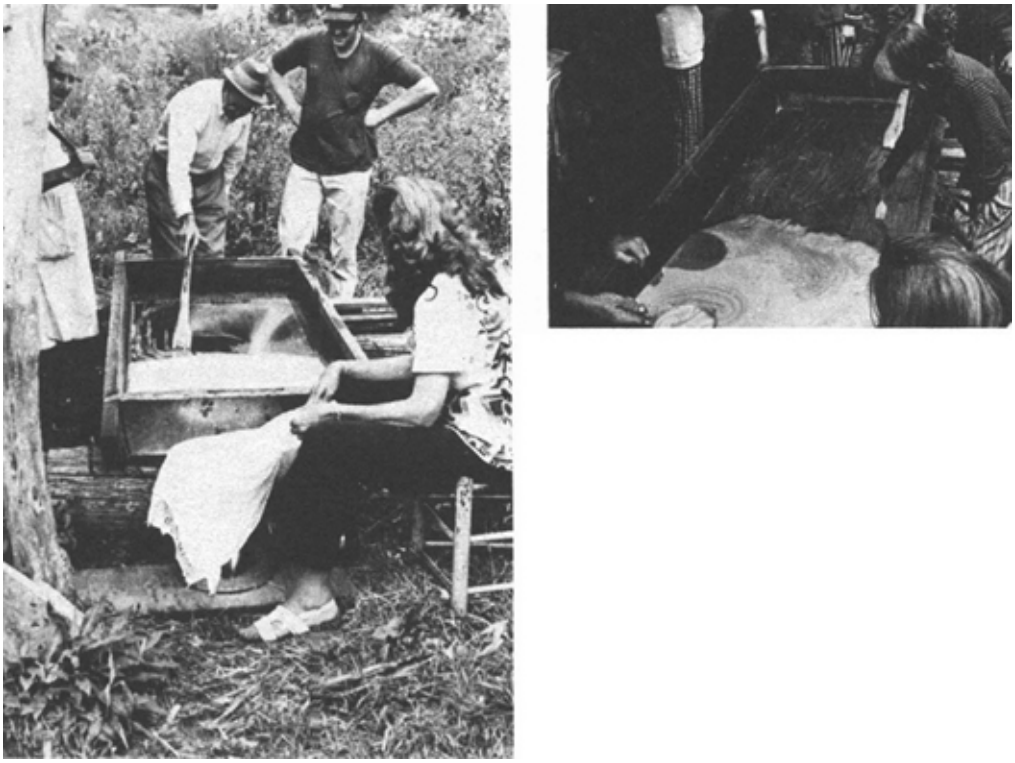

ILLUSTRATION 38 The sorghum is scraped down to one end of the boiler-box (*left*) and is then dipped out of the boiler-box with a small saucepan (*right*).

ILLUSTRATION 39 Finally, the sorghum is poured through several layers of cheesecloth into five-gallon cans (the Brooks use empty lard cans), where it cools before being stored in smaller containers.