

Meat_Potting_2004.txt

MEAT POTTING

To: richard@io.org

From: Al Durtschi <mark@lis.ab.ca>

Subject: Potting Meat

Rich, Here is some research I've been doing on preserving meat by potting. I would be flattered if you chose to use it in your stuff. All I ask is that you leave my name with it... and maybe my E-mail address as long as E-mail addresses fit into your layout.

I hope you like it.

P.S.S. I love your work. You are doing wonderful, important things.

Meat Potting:

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Before refrigeration changed everything here in Southern Alberta, meat potting was a more prevalent way of preserving meat than either salt curing or drying . In my mind, 'meat potting' was an accident waiting for a place to happen, but under the appropriate circumstances it could have a place again.

This is how we used to do it...

As told by Gorden Schaufert (born 1942)

Meat potting is preserving meat in it's own grease in a large crock pot.

This is how we did it. Early in the morning Dad killed a pig and started cutting it up. He gave the pieces to Mom who had the wood stove in the kitchen hot and ready to cook. She started frying the pork and prepared the crock pot. This pot was about 18 inches in diameter and 24 inches deep.

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Mother washed it, and got it just as clean as she could get it.

As the pork fried, it gave off lots of grease. She took some of this very hot grease and poured it into the bottom of the crock, sealing and sterilizing the bottom. Then she put the meat she had just finished cooking down onto this grease.

As she continued to cook throughout the day she added the well fried meat and covered it with the hot fat that came from the cooking process.

By the evening the pig was all fried up and in the pot, covered over with a nice layer of lard that had hardened. As the days passed by, we dug down into the lard to where the meat was, pulled out what we needed, and put it in the frying pan.

We cooked it good a second time to kill any bacteria that could

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have possibly gotten into it. Doing this not only re-sterilized the meat for eating, but melted off all the excess fat.

The meat was taken out of the pan and the fat was poured back into the pot to seal up the hole we had just made getting the meat out.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. How long can pork be preserved in this way?

In the Summer time we could expect it to last about six weeks.

Of course in the Winter it would last much longer. When it went bad there was no question about it, as it really started to stink.

(In my research for this subject, I talked with many old timers who never had any meat go bad through many years of potting.)

2. How much did you have to cook it to be sure it was cooked enough?

We cooked it until all the red was gone, then cooked it some more. If there was even one piece put in the barrel partially cooked it could have easily destroyed the meat in the whole barrel. (Leslie Basel <lebasel@nando.net>,

The custodian of the FAQs for rec.food.preserving suggests the meat be cooked to 240 degrees F and the fat that is poured in after it be even hotter.)

3. What other meats can be preserved in this way?

Really, you can preserve any type of meat. But if a low fat type of meat is potted, there must be an adequate supply of extra fat to cover the meat as it is cooked and placed in the pot.

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(Several old timers talked about potting beef. But mostly it was used for pork as it furnished it's own fat.)

4. Could meat be salt cured and then potted?

Yes, and this was done by some families. It is hard to say how long this extended the shelf life of the meat in the pot.

5. What can I do to enhance my chances of potting safely?

Insure your crock pot is clean and sanitized before you start.

Be sure the grease you pour into the crock is always nice and hot as well as the meat.

Keep everything as clean as possible. Don't use the same cooking utensil to take the meat out of the pan as you used to turn or handle

the raw meat.

Leave the utensil you use to move the meat from the pan into the pot in the frying pan where it can stay hot and therefore sterilized.

Do not touch the cooked meat with anything except the cooking utensil you transfer the meat from the pan to the pot with.

When putting meat into the crock, don't touch the sides of the crock pot and don't touch the meat. Cover the crock with a lid when not putting meat or fat into it.

Remember, your success depends entirely on insuring that not one cell of bacteria is permitted to remain alive in the pot. And on using the meat, schedule things out so you plan on using the last of the meat within 6 weeks.

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(This was not a problem for the early folks as they often had 10 or more children.)

6. Should I give this a try to gain experience in this type of meat preserving?

Potting is no longer done for good reason. It's just not an approved way of preserving meat, considering our present technology.

This information is given here for three reasons:

a. Save the skill from being lost in a rapidly changing world.

(There are fewer old timers every day.)

b. Help people realize it is an option (in very hard times).

c. Preserve our heritage.

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Should you want to give it a try, go ahead. If you follow these instructions you will probably have good luck. Remember when you re-heat your meat, cook it good a second time to kill any bacteria that might have gotten into it.

And if it starts to smell bad, don't mess around with it, but throw it away.

A last comment:

The term 'scraping the bottom of the barrel' came from potting meat. By the time the old timers got to the bottom of the pot, the quality of the meat was often very questionable. And hence the term means even today 'using something rather undesirable because it is all there is.'

(Ref: Leslie Basel)

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