

# PLAIN PIG

By WINNIFRED REEVE

Pig day on the ranch! The women have got to step lively. That mountain of pig must be disposed of. All other household duties with the exception of the "three square meals" which our men demand, are to be held in abeyance while we tackle that pig.

The kitchen—indeed the whole house—is odorous of pork. Heaped on tables and boards, in pans and tubs, steaming away in vessels on top of the stoves, and sizzling in pans in the oven, are great and small pieces of pig—plain pig.

## Must Have Pig

First thing in the morning, the men bore the fat load into the kitchen, having butchered it the night before down at the farm on the prairie where we raise things. On a cattle ranch we raise only cattle and horses; nevertheless our men must have their pig to eat. Their expertise in cutting up the two animals fill us women with awe and admiration, me with awe, and Nellie with admiration. Inside of a few minutes, as it seemed to me, they were through with their end of the job, had washed up and departed barnward. We could hear them singing, shouting or cursing as they started off for the day's work.

## Felt a Bit Rattled

Nellie and I look at each other and then at that pig. She is very solemn. I feel a bit rattled, and just for a moment I try to figure out some way of escape. There is none. That pig has been confidently placed in my supposed competent hands, and if anything goes wrong with it the blame will be mine. I know that my cook is more capable of bossing the pig job than I, but fate in this case has assigned the disposition of that pig to me. There lies a job before us that bids fair to carry us through the night, unless we do some hustling. I am convinced that one more woman could take it in; besides I do not lack experience in this particular work.

## Looked Wise

Aforetime I have had the out-of-doors call to me and have sought to shake responsibility, but when I yielded to temptation the results have been disastrous. So I bustle about the kitchen now, look as wise as I can under the circumstances, and lay out our campaign of work. Nellie is to run the grinder, putting through the fat for the lard and then the meat for the sausage and the scrapple. She is to clean the head and feet, render the lard, make the head cheese and clean up the mess as we go along.

## Pickling the Pork

Meanwhile I am to "put down" the bacon and ham and shoulders in brine, which we have already boiled overnight; I am to take care of the pork, and when the grinding

## I am to make the scrapple

sausage meat. I start in on it to go into the brine, a mixture of salt, saltpeter, sugar, molasses and spices, pieces all over with salt and sugar and pack them into the barrels, laying the fat against the sides and the fat in the middle. Small barrel at the top. Over this my brine, first having tested it by putting an egg in it. As the maimed on top I perceived I put in enough salt. So I set a stone on a huge flat stone on top of the meat under the brine, the barrels with cloths and my pork is in the pickle a few weeks we will take it out of the brine and smoke it. Then it be put in cheesecloth sacks, with straw packed around it and in the meat house, to be used as needed.

We are now rid of all the large pieces, but oh! what a job lies before us, for they have killed two pigs, weighing about 250 pounds each.

## Some In the Oven

While I have been "putting down" the big pieces, and Nellie grinding the small, my three long, fine loins of pork have been roasting in the oven. Our men like fresh pork, but even in the fall we do not take the chance of keeping the fresh pork. So, instead of putting the loins in brine, I cook them, pack them in crocks and cover them with lard. When the lard is cold it makes an airtight protection for the meat, which is ready for use any time.

## Sausage Meat Ready

Nellie by this time has her lard rendering on the fire. Her sausage meat, too, is already for me, but lunch catches up with us while we are in the midst of our work. We scurry about the kitchen, intent on having the meal on time, for that high-priced, haughty help must be fed well and on time. The old hired man who gave a hand in the farm kitchen is a thing of the dear past. Now we have among those present, in the big washroom adjoining the kitchen, fence riders, bronco busters, cowboys and fellows whose main job is to "break" horses, brand and de-horn cattle, ride the range, and in the slack season, just prior to the all round-up, condescend to give a hand with the haying. In the period when labor was scarcely to be had for love or money, the "riders" scorned to "hay," and claimed that was a "farm hand's job," and not a cowpuncher's. Of course, on a cattle ranch our men never put their hands to such menial toil as chores. A modern cattle ranch does not include chores in its itinerary, and many indeed do not even have milk, but to be a colloquial expression of cowdom, they just "tickle the tin"—meaning they use canned milk.

## What Ho! Spare Ribs

"Ho! Spare Ribs," much as it is dreaded by the women of the ranch, is always a day approved by the men, as is evidenced by the relish with which they polish down incredible quantities of

spare ribs, that are the first day's offering. They feed away with noisy and hearty enjoyment. I, however, have no appetite for pig, but munch in preference on dry toast, a poached egg, buttermilk and jam.

Lunch out of the way I am back at our pig. While Nellie is doing the dishes, her pig's head is boiling away on the stove, and I tackle the ground sausage meat. I know Nellie considers the grinding the hardest part, but indeed there is a bit of art and work in the mixing. I add the right proportions of sage, summer savory, bread crumbs, pepper, salt and paprika. I test a piece on the frying pan and find it good. Then I pack my mixture down tight into small stone crocks, pour melted lard over the top and my sausage meat is done and ready for future use. Nellie, strong of arm, carries the crocks to the storeroom, and I attack part of the pig's head, the heart and other small pieces that have been boiling on the stove. These I run through the grinder, and put back on the stove in a double boiler, with an onion, a carrot, salt and pepper and cayenne and a pinch of thyme and savory. To this is added an equal proportion of cornmeal as the meat, and half a cup of oatmeal. When this mixture has boiled to the desired consistency it is poured into bread pans and put away to cool. In the morning it will be set in firm loaves. Slices about half an inch thick are cut off the loaf, rolled in flour and fried brown for breakfast. Philadelphia scrapple, as it is called, is always a favorite breakfast with our men.

## Head Cheese Finished

Nellie has finished making her head cheese with the remainder of the head. She has a dozen little bowls with slices of tongue at the bottom and the head cheese poured on top. Also she has finished her lard. The table is almost cleared and Nellie is carrying the lard pails off to the pantry, throw out a pan of the crisp fat rinds to the chickens. Our dog and cats rush up to share the feast and I prodigally throw forth the rest of the stuff, but am stopped by the wrathful voice of Nellie. She shouts that she can make soap from "them pieces you are jest throwin' away."

Nellie has never known any other life than that of the farm, and if there is anything in the world that she cannot utilize in some way or another, I don't know what it could be. It is a matter of real distress to her that our nice modern sink swallows up her dishwater, for dishwater, she declares is fine food for pigs and chickens, and I think Nellie secretly disapproves of the manner of life on a mere cattle ranch. She says that a farm is "far more sensible and ain't got so many airs as a ranch."

## Now for a Ride

Now we are all through, and I say: "Hurrah, Nellie, here's where I escape. Come along, and we'll have a ride before dinner."

She stops her work of scraping her precious pig's feet and gives me a look of half astonishment, half withering scorn. Nellie does not condescend to even reply to my suggestion, but I read in her face her opinion of a woman who will go "gallivantin'" about on a horse when there's real work to be done in a house. So I run up to my room. Get out of my greasy duds and am into a fresh-smelling pongee middy, riding breeches and coat, pull on my brown leather riding boots, a kid's tam for my head and my Indian gally-beaded gauntlets (which one of our squaws

we adjoin an Italian reserve—made specially for me) and am running downstairs in short order, en route

through the kitchen and out through the garden and barnyard to the corral, where I know Silver Heels awaits me. As I pass through the kitchen Nellie inquires with elaborate sarcasm:

"Ain't you goin' to give me a hand with them pigs' feet?"

"I should say I ain't," I laugh back.

"Throw 'em out, Nellie."

"The best part of the pig!" grunts Nellie, "I'd like to see me doin' anything so foolish and wasteful."

She stops her work long enough to examine me with a critical and condemning eye. Divided skirts are the proper garb for a respectable woman is the opinion of Nellie, and I have

never been able to convince her that

my coat and breeches are just as decent and far more comfortable, and

certainly better looking than the

khaki skirts that have a nasty habit

when you are on a horse of ascending to your knee with every breeze that blows, and a woman in the saddle as much as I am does not want

to be weighted down with frills on her back. So, ignoring Nellie's look of disapproval, I trot off jauntily from the kitchen; not so quickly, however, but what I overhear Nellie's remark, intended maybe for me, and maybe for her own consumption. Says Nellie:

"Pretty soft for some folks it takes

life easy and can go runnin' around

doin' nothing."

## Doing Nothing

Doing nothing! I am overcome with indignation. I, who have helped to put down about 100 pounds of pig! I am so cross with Nellie that I cinch Silver Heels much too tightly and he turns about restlessly and noses toward my shoulder. As I throw my leg—I suppose one ought to say "limb" if one follows the standards of a Nellie—across my horse's bonny back, and I come out through that barnyard at a neat clip. Before me stretches a wide expanse of rolling meadows, fragrant with new-mown hay—for they are still haying, though it is the end of October. Thus it is sunny Alberta. I face the beginning of a glorious sunset lingering in splendor behind that skyline of Rocky mountains. There is a clean, cold nip in the air, a stillness and freshness and fragrance

that both charm and exhilarate. As I canter across the country I forget all about the tiresome day in the hot kitchen, and the mountains and hills of pig. Our dog is leaping around us, jumping up to tease Silver Heels, and I tell him to begone and bring home the milk cows, and I point with my quirt to where a bunch of cattle are grazing on a hill slope. You should see our Patsey then. He is off across the meadow and field at a breakneck speed. Now he is on the hillside. That little dog barks at the heels of three of that herd of 20 or 25 head, picking and bunching the milk cows from the rest of the herd and driving them down to the milk shed.

"Good old Pat. Nice old Pat call at him in reward, but only the wagging-tail and lolling tongue and a yelping bark of that small dog reveals that he hears me. Pat is at work, and not to be beguiled by the fair words of a mere woman. Those cows must be taken and driven into the cowshed, and then Pat has a job to close the door with his nose. A trick taught him by my twelve-year-old boy. Presently as I turn into the path that leads through our woods down to the Ghost river I hear panting behind me, and lo! Pat has his job done, breathless from his frantic run to catch up with us, yelli for approval. What a dog! A little mongrel cattle cur, with an ugly shaggy coat, a comical wis, head with one ear everlastingly cocked and two bright, intelligent eyes fix themselves faithfully upon you and makes you think of "Alice Bert Bolt, who wept with a light when you gave her a smile, and trembled with fear at your frown."

## The Canter Home

We have a dandy canter home, Pat racing and beating us. I don't have to unsaddle Silver Heels, for by this time the "hands" are in and I am relieved of my horse and bade to "skiddoo" to the house, as the men are hungry enough to eat a horse, and if I don't have a crackerjack meal for them there won't be anything left of Silver Heels.

## This is the Life!

As I come into the ranch house I feel refreshed and hungry, and have forgotten all about being cross with Nellie. She, too, is in fine humor, actually singing as she hustles about getting dinner on time. I see her eye going ever and anon to the window, and I take note that Nellie is singing the same song that that new cowpuncher of ours is whistling over by the corral. She doesn't invite me to help her get dinner, nor make any odious comments about my lazy life. So I hum the same tune too, swagger upstairs, am out of my riding togs, have a nice cold dip for ours is a modern ranch, and we like baths just as well as city folk do—am into fresh clothes, and, though I have an almost grown-up son (at least he says he is) I feel like a two-year-old as I pull up to the table, smile in approval at the hearty words of that new cowpuncher who says emphatically as he looks at that piece of odorous pig's liver on his plate:

"Gee! This is the life!"

## SAVE THE STAFF O' LIFE

Because bread either gets dry or mouldy if it is not properly taken care of, an appalling amount of it is thrown into the garbage can.

And quite unnecessary, if one will take the forethought to toast it when the oven is being used.

There are a variety of palatable ways of using toasted bread. Baked toast is a pleasant change from the rather mushy milk toast.

Butter each slice, place in the baking pan and cover with milk, season and bake.

French toast is delicious made from toasted bread. It must be soaked a bit longer or dipped twice—then fried slowly in just enough butter to brown, using a scant cup of milk to each egg.

CROUTONS may be used in several ways besides soup. Though they are well worth the trouble just for soup during the hot weather when crackers lose their crispness.

If, to the usual hot milk used for milk toast, a beaten egg is added, it will vary the flavor and increase the nutritious value.

There are many good recipes for stale bread muffins, cakes, etc., besides bread pudding.

Bread wasting has become a habit, when, if reminded, it only takes a bit of planning to eliminate it entirely.

I once lived by a bride, and they were trying to live during war times on a small salary, who kept the sugar in her bread box and rolled the bread in a newspaper and a tea towel and left it upon the pantry shelf—yet she whiningly complained that as a family they would not touch bread unless it was perfectly fresh. She threw away enough bread to feed a family twice the size of her own.

## WAGES ARE REDUCED

BROCKVILLE, Sept. 24.—The local branch of the Bricklayers', Masons' and Plasterers' union announced that from September 1 the union scale of wages would be 90 cents per hour, instead of \$1, as has prevailed for the past two years. Employers of labor were greatly pleased to think the union had voluntarily lowered their hourly rate.

## PLANT FOOD

Get a little stick glue at the druggist's and put three or four small pieces at intervals in the soil around your fern. Do this three or four times a year, and you will notice a marked improvement in the plant.

At thirty Dr. Edward Acheson, the inventor of artificial graphite, was

starving in London, and he might have died but for the kindness of a working-class family whose acquaintance he had made. Not until he was near fifty years

of age did fortune change her frowns for smiles. Today he is classed among American millionaires, and his fame

has spread to all parts of the world.