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EC69-221 The Large Quantity Barbecue

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THE LARGE QUANTITY barbecue

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This publication is dedicated to the memory of the late W. J. Loeffel, the author of the first printing of this bulletin.

THE LARGE QUANTITY barbecue

By
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The tang of the outdoors makes a picnic a pleasurable event in all except the most severe weather. Whether the group to be fed is large or small, there is nothing that promotes so much enthusiasm, breaks down reserve more rapidly, or stimulates more real fellowship and wholesome fun than a barbecue.

The method which follows is adapted to feeding large groups (200 or more) with a minimum of effort. It was developed to a high degree by R. J. Kinzer, who for many years served the American Hereford Association as secretary.

This method employs the covered pit. It not only saves labor but assures a most desirable finished product, as all of the juice is retained in the meat.

Planning the Barbecue

In arranging a barbecue, there are many details which require careful planning in advance. By careful planning, many problems can be anticipated and avoided.

If possible, a barbecue should be arranged as an outdoor event. Of course, it is always comforting if adequate shelter is available, in case of inclement weather.

Estimate of crowd. To plan efficiently, it is important that the estimate of the number to be fed be as accurate as possible. If tickets are sold, a deadline can be set for their purchase, and this removes all need for estimates. It is usually a good practice, in any event, to overestimate requirements.

Appointment of committees. Committees with specific duties should be set up. A general committee or planning committee is necessary. Consult with or have someone locally who has experience in quantity cooking on the committee. There should be a committee on fuel, and others on grounds, preparing pit, boning and preparing meat, making coffee, serving, etc.

The Menu

Early in the planning a decision must be reached as to how elaborate a menu is to be prepared. If only a barbecue sandwich and coffee are to be served, the problem is relatively simple. If a more elaborate meal is desired, naturally the planning involves greater detail.

An advantage of a simple menu, of course, is that it is easier and faster to serve. Every additional item, especially those which involve a choice, slows down the serving lines. On the other hand, additional foods are filling and make the meat go further.

Some food suggestions. Baked beans, scalloped potatoes and similar dishes are very popular ones to include in the barbecue menu. They are filling and can be kept warm easily. Potato chips and potato salad are very acceptable for hot weather barbecues. Green salads, too, are a welcome addition. Perhaps cabbage slaw is as satisfactory a salad as can be made. Pickles and relishes or barbecue sauce are often provided.

A good supply of coffee and iced tea is important for a successful barbecue. Since the barbecue is usually held in the warm months, iced tea will be very popular.

The barbecue buns. Barbecued meat is generally best served in a barbecue bun. The bun keeps the meat warm and does not dry out as quickly as sliced bread. It is also easier to hold while eating. It eliminates the need for knives and forks. All food should be ordered well in advance of the barbecue. Buns must be sliced by the bakery. Whole-wheat or rye bread buns are very desirable as they are not only different, but hold their shape better after coming in contact with the meat juices. Regular hamburger buns are also acceptable.

If there is a dessert. As often as not, no dessert is served. However, an apple or other fresh fruit in season, a cookie, or an ice cream cup or bar is sometimes included. It should be remembered that when serving cafeteria style there is a limit to the amount of food a person can carry on a paper plate.

The Meat

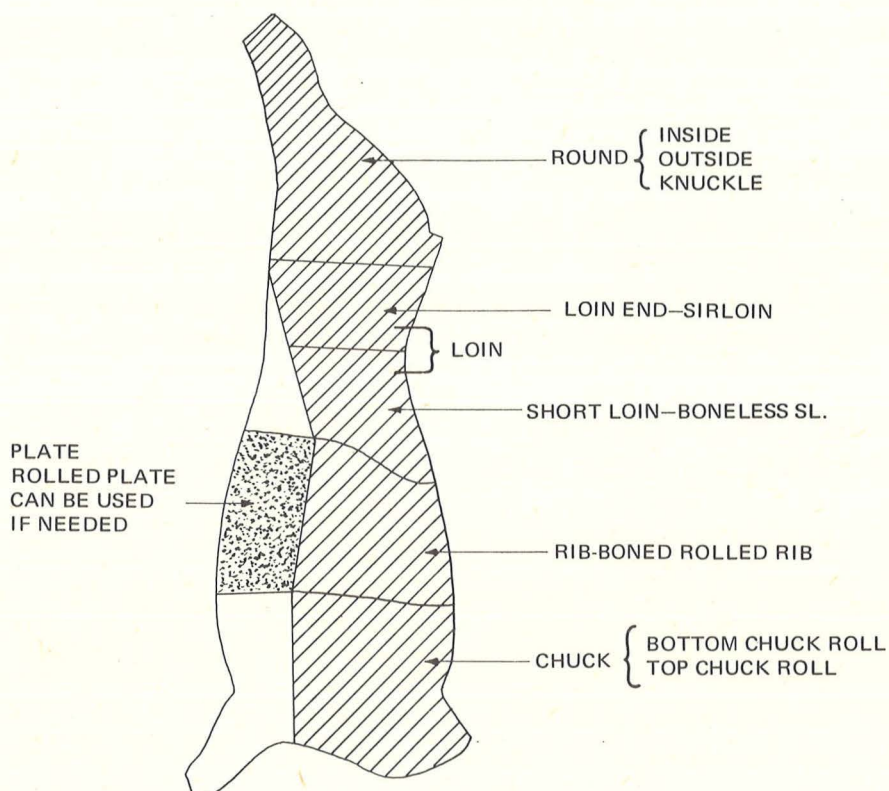
Any kind of meat can be used for the barbecue but beef is generally used. When pork is barbecued, it is important that it be thoroughly cooked. In general, a good grade of meat should be used. The top grades are sometimes excessively fat, causing heavy trimming losses at serving.

In beef, any of the thick cuts (chuck, rib, loin, round) may be used. While these cuts may be barbecued with the bone in, it is strongly urged that they be boned and rolled. This will save much time when the meat is served (and time is exceedingly valuable then); and, furthermore, there is less waste when the boning is done in advance. Even the plate may be boned and rolled for barbecuing, but such cuts are usually marked and set aside for use later as "seconds."

Aging the meat. If good refrigeration facilities are available (34° -36° F.) to age the meat, it is suggested that cattle be slaughtered about two weeks before the barbecue. Aging or ripening of good quality beef makes the meat more tender and improves the flavor. If meat is to be purchased as cuts, beef rounds may be boned as efficiently and will make as attractive servings as any cuts that can be used.

Figuring edible portion. Cattle that have been short-fed may be counted upon to yield 57 to 58 percent, and longfeds more. In other words, a 1,000-pound short-fed steer will produce about 570 pounds of carcass.

BEEF CHART



Figuring that the chuck is 26%, rib 9%, loin 16%, and round 24%, these cuts make up about 75% of the 570 pounds or 427 pounds of meat suitable for barbecuing. This meat, of course, contains bone and some surplus fat. With the designated cuts from a beef of medium quality, perhaps not over 80 percent of the edible meat could be counted upon. Thus, 80 percent of 427 pounds would leave 341 pounds of boneless meat.

A pound of boneless meat will make four small servings, three good servings, or two liberal servings.

Boning the Meat

It has already been suggested that all cuts of meat be boned before roasting to save time when the meat is served. A person or persons with some knowledge of boning should be selected for this task. It is something that cannot be done by "just anybody."

There are many ways of boning a side of beef. The following method has proved very successful. The carcass is broken up into Chicago style cuts.

The round, with the rump on, is placed on the block, aitchbone up. The tail bone is trimmed off, following which the aitchbone is dissected out. A cut is made just below the patella or knee cap and upward following the thigh bone. By using a boning hook the three-cornered knuckle cut can be pulled off. The knee cap is then trimmed out. The round is split down the back and the two fleshy muscles, the "inside" and "outside" or the "top round" and the "bottom round" trimmed out. Thus, three choice boneless cuts are secured from the round.

The loin is placed on the block, bone side up. The kidney and kidney fat are carefully trimmed out, after which the full tenderloin is removed. The loin is then divided at the pinbone into the sirloin and the short loin.

The sirloin is boned out by removing the backbone and the pelvic bone. The two bones are held together by a ligament (sacroiliac) or "slip joint." If the knife is run through this to separate the two bones, their removal is simplified.

The short loin contains one rib, which is removed. The lumbar vertebrae (T-bones) are next removed all in one piece. The tenderloin is now placed in the underside of the short loin with the large end forward. The thin end of the tenderloin may be folded under. The short loin is rolled up and tied.

The rib is boned and rolled in the conventional fashion.

The chuck is placed on the block, bone side up. With a narrow-bladed knife the vertebrae of the back and neck are unjointed. The back vertebrae with their attached ribs are removed. The neck vertebrae are also removed. The yellow neck ligament, or "back strap," is trimmed out. The chuck is then split flatwise just under the blade and arm bones. The under part of the chuck is rolled up and tied, making a bottom chuck roll. The blade and the arm bones are removed and the outer part of the chuck rolled and tied to form a top chuck roll.

The plate, as suggested, may be boned and rolled. The meat is a little fibrous and, therefore, specially marked for "seconds."

Preparing cuts. In the preparation of the boneless cuts, trim off surplus fat. If left on the roasts, it will be wasted at the serving tables. It is desirable to make the cuts as nearly uniform in weight as possible. Cuts should not weigh in excess of 25 to 30 pounds.

Care of boneless meat. It should be recognized that boneless meat is very perishable and that it must be kept under refrigeration until placed in the pit. Boneless meat should not be piled up; it should be spread out to assure complete chilling.

Wrapping the Meat

The cuts of meat are seasoned by rubbing a little salt and pepper on the surface. The cuts are then wrapped in aluminum foil or locker paper.

In wrapping, the cut is rolled toward one corner of the foil, turning in the other two corners. After wrapping in foil, the cut is similarly wrapped in clean burlap. The roll may be tied, although skewering the burlap with nails has proved satisfactory. Small cuts, like knuckles from the round, may be wrapped two in a bundle.

The Pit

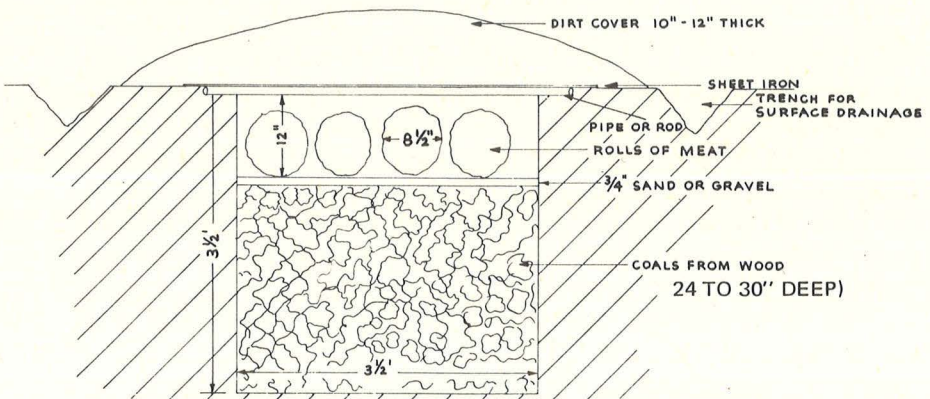
The pit should be in a well-drained spot so that a sudden downpour will not cause surface water to drain into it. It may be ditched like a tent as an added precaution against flooding. It should be where there is no danger of the fire spreading to surrounding structures or vegetation.

Type of soil. The soil should be of a clay type. Sandy soil crumbles badly and caves in. When a pit must be dug in sandy soil, it should be lined with sheet iron or galvanized iron held in place by No. 9 wire fastened to "dead men," posts buried in the ground about 3 feet from the pit wall.

Dimensions of pit. The pit should be 3 1/2 feet wide and 3 1/2 feet deep. About 6 feet of length should be allowed for every 200 pounds of meat. The end walls of the pit should be vertical rather than sloping. The long axis of the pit should be with the prevailing wind to provide the necessary draft.

Pits are rarely made more than 18 or 20 feet long. When more room is needed, it is better to make several pits. These should be sufficiently separated (at least 12 feet apart) so they can be fired. In digging the pit, the dirt should be thrown well back so as to leave ample working space around it. The use of two pits makes it possible to keep meat warm, by opening one pit at a time.

DIAGRAM OF PIT



The pit should be in a well-drained spot. It should be 3 1/2 feet deep, 3 1/2 feet wide. Allow six feet in length for every 200 pounds of meat. The dirt should be thrown well back to provide ample work space.

The Fuel

Good fuel is very desirable. Hard wood is preferable to soft wood, as it makes more and better coals. Avoid creosote-treated wood.

It is important to have ample fuel on hand. Usually the amount needed will be about two or three times the volume of the pit. The policy of having a surplus is always a good one, however. Running out of fuel in the middle of the night will cause considerable delay in the work at hand.

Kindling the fire. Some kindling should be provided to start the fire. Pine, brush or cobs may be used. A little kerosene or tractor fuel is helpful. Excessive kindling should be avoided, however, for this frequently forms an unburned layer of wood at the bottom of the pit.

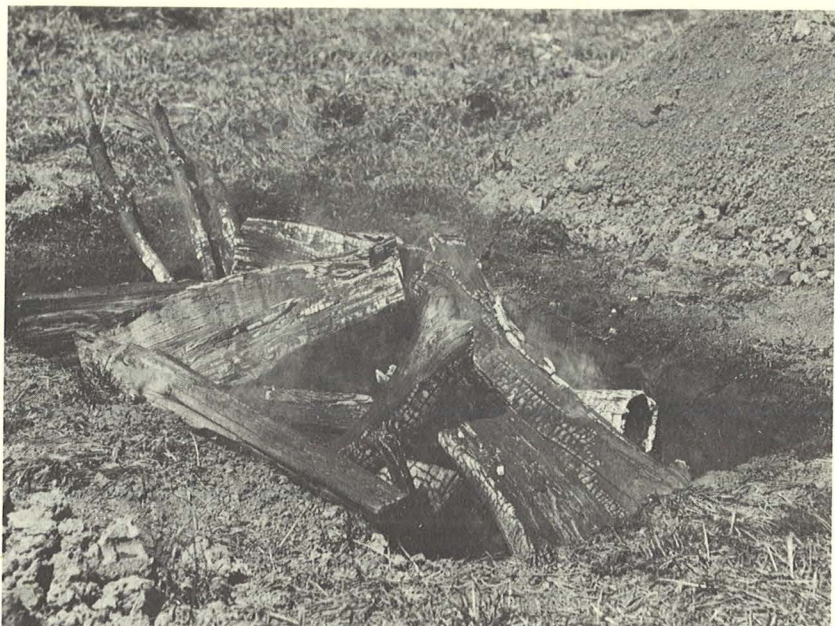
The bed of coals. All of the fuel must be burned to coals, as it is the stored heat in the coals that cooks the meat. The fuel should be "worked up" into pieces of relatively uniform size. Chunks of unusually large diameter should be kept out, as they burn very slowly.

The bed of coals should be from 2 to 2 1/2 feet deep. To secure a bed of coals of the required depth usually takes about six hours, depending somewhat on the quality of the fuel.

Burning the fuel is an important job, therefore sufficient dependable help should be available.



The fire should be started in the bottom of the pit with light kindling.



The fuel should be uniform in size so all of it will burn down to coals at about the same time.



When the bed of coals is ready, unburned chunks of wood should be taken out.



The glowing coals are leveled with a rake.



The coals ready to be covered with coarse sand.



About three-fourths of an inch of coarse, dry sand is spread over the coals.

Gravel

Sufficient concrete gravel or coarse sand should be on hand to cover the coals to a depth of about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. This gravel or sand should be as dry as possible. Metal plates or sheets of one-quarter inch steel can be used in place of gravel.

Placing Meat in Pit

The coals must be well burned down and should come within a foot of the top of the pit. They should be leveled off with a rake and any unburned chunks pulled out. When the bed is all leveled, the concrete gravel or coarse sand is scattered evenly over the coals. This "kills" the fire, after which the bundles of meat are placed on the gravel. The larger bundles should be placed in the center of the pit and space should be left between the bundles to permit the heat to circulate.



The bundles of meat, wrapped in foil and then in burlap, are placed on the sand.

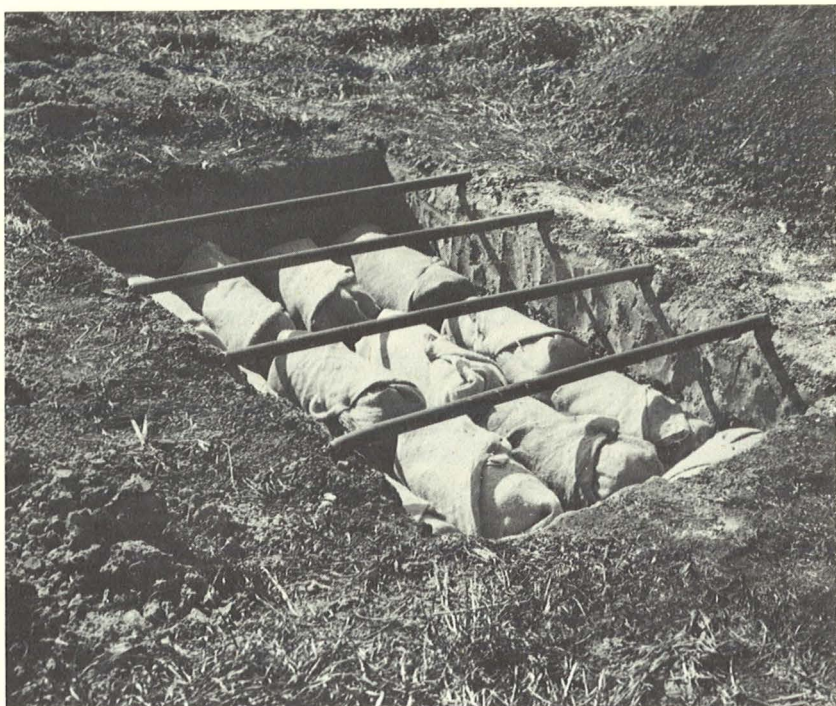
Covering the Pit

With the bundles of meat in the pit, speed is imperative in closing it in order to retain all of the stored heat possible. Here again a dependable crew is needed.

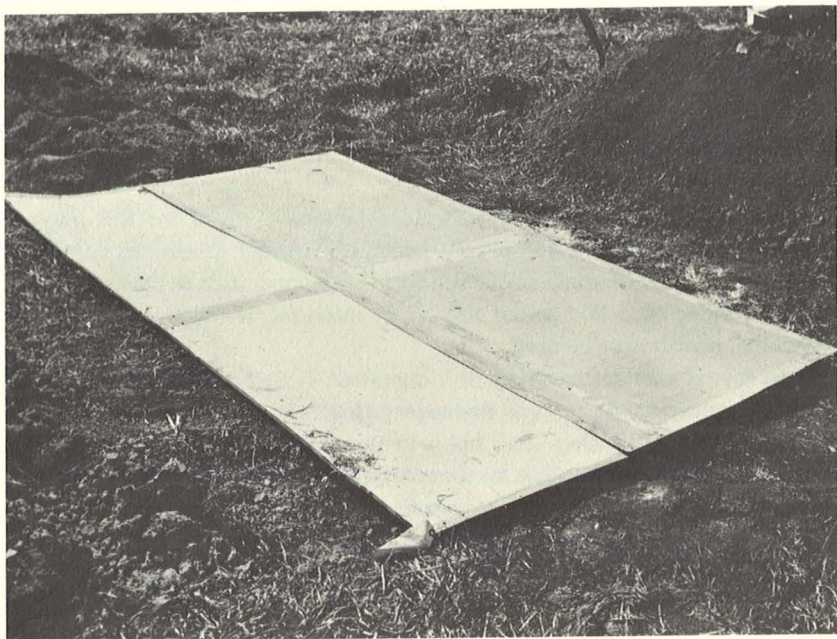
Sheet iron is probably the most satisfactory material for this purpose. Boiler plate, if obtainable, is very good. Corrugated galvanized roofing or siding serves well, if some added support is provided, such as steel posts, pipe or reinforcing rods laid across the pit at intervals. If metal covering is not available, boards may be used.

In laying a metal covering, the operation is begun at one end and the pieces overlapped. As soon as the cover is in place, the dirt is piled on it to a depth of 10 to 12 inches. This holds in the heat. Special attention should be given to sealing and packing all spots around the edge where steam escapes. When ready to open the pit, begin removing the covering at the end closed last.

One advantage of this method of barbecuing meat is that the meat requires no turning or attention during the 10 to 12 hours of cooking. This permits the personnel to utilize their energies fully for other essential preparations.



When light metal is used to cover the pit, pipes, rods, or steel fence posts are laid across the trench for added support.



Light metal, boiler plate, or boards may be used to cover the pit.



As quickly as possible after the pit is covered, from 10 to 12 inches of soil is placed on it to hold in the heat. The pit should be trenched like a tent to protect it from surface drainage.



After 10 to 12 hours of cooking, the pit is uncovered and the bundles of meat are removed, unwrapped and taken to the serving table.

Time Schedule for Cooking

To barbecue meat, about 10 hours cooking is necessary. If a barbecue is to be served at noon, it means the meat must be put in the pit about 2 a.m. Figuring that it takes about 5 hours to produce a suitable bed of coals, the fire must be started about 9:00 p.m.

To serve at about 6:00 p.m., the meat should be put on at 8:00 a.m., which means the fire would need to be started about 3 a.m. In very cold or windy weather, some additional time should be allowed to prepare the bed of coals.

A meat thermometer is by far the most worthwhile investment for a barbecue. Put a dial type thermometer in one of the larger packages at the end of the pit you plan to open first. About two to three hours before you plan to serve the barbecue, uncover this end of the pit and check the thermometer. The internal meat temperature should be 145° F at this time. The meat should be 160° F when served. If the temperature is too close to 160° F when you check it, remove some or all the dirt from the top of the pit. Do not overcook the meat, as it will be dry and difficult to carve. Do not remove the cover from the pit until the meat is needed, as the heat will be lost from the pit.

Barbecue Lamb

Lambs, yearlings and young ewes that are in good finish can be used for this barbecue. Animals should be slaughtered two weeks before the barbecue. All surface fat should be removed from the wholesale cuts of lamb. The legs, loins, racks and shoulders should be boned. Breasts, riblets and shanks should not be considered for prime servings.

The meat should be marinated for 12 to 24 hours before cooking. Thick boneless cuts should be cut so that the maximum thickness is about two inches. Meat need not be rolled and tied. Cooking is done on a grill about three inches above a bed of charcoal. The remainder of the menu and procedures are essentially the same as for the beef barbecue.

The marinade for lamb can vary considerably according to taste. The following recipe should be sufficient for 50 pounds of boneless meat, depending on containers used to hold the meat during the marinade period:

One half gallon each of vinegar, cooking oil and water.

Spices to taste:

- 1/2 ounce black pepper
- 1/2 ounce celery salt
- 1/2 ounce onion salt
- 1/2 ounce garlic salt
- 1/4 ounce oregano
- 1/4 ounce allspice
- 1 pound sugar

Place meat in a deep pan or tub and completely cover the meat with the marinade. Marinade overnight in a refrigerator. During cooking, the meat can be dipped in the marinade to avoid surface overcooking. Make sure that the meat is served hot. Barbecue sauce and dill pickles should be offered.

Roast Pig Barbecue

The usual weight of pig used is 25 to 100 pounds, with the 50 to 75 pound live weight pig most acceptable. About one pound of carcass weight should be allowed for each person. Two smaller pigs are usually better than one very large pig. Considerable waste will be found in a roasted pig.

Two methods are recommended for cooking the dressed pig. Pit cooking and oven or smokehouse cooking methods are usually employed. During cooking a block of wood should be put in the mouth and the ears and tail should be covered with foil.

Pit cookery is basically the same as for beef. Care should be taken to avoid dirt and sand coming in contact with the meat. In oven or smokehouse cookery, a temperature of 225° F is recommended. Cooking time of 10-12 hours is desirable for all three methods. Be sure to place the pig on a tray or large pan suitable for carrying the finished pig before cooking. When properly done, the pig will tear or fall apart with rough handling.

A meat thermometer must be placed in the thickest part of the shoulder. An internal temperature of 170° F is desired. Roast pork should be served hot and trimmed carefully of fat as it is carved. A barbecue sauce is desirable to be put on the meat.

Barbecue Beans

Soak beans overnight and cook with other ingredients for at least three hours. Recipe will feed about 200 people, 3 to 4 ounce servings.

- 18 lb - Dry pinto or red beans
- 2 lb - Fresh pork belly, ham or rind
- 2 lb - Bacon
- 3 lb - Onions finely chopped
- 1 lb - Brown sugar (dark)
- 1 cup - Worcestershire sauce
- ½ cup - Seasoning salt
- Chili pepper (add to taste desired)
- Salt (add to taste desired)

Barbecue Sauce

- 4 gal - Catsup—good quality
- 1 gal - Worcestershire sauce
- 1 gal - Barbecue sauce
- 2 lb - Brown sugar

This amount is sufficient for use on 200 to 250 pounds of boned uncooked meat.

Cole Slaw

Allow one pound of cabbage for about six servings of slaw (4 ounces per serving).

- 20 lb - green cabbage
- 4 lb - red cabbage
- 10 green bell peppers

Chop or grate cabbage and peppers. Add dressing no earlier than one hour before serving. A good dressing is:

- 1 quart cider vinegar
- 1 quart half and half
- 1 quart water
- 1 1/2 lb. sugar
- 6 oz. salt
- 2 oz. black pepper
- 2 oz. celery seed

Add spices to taste. Dressing should be tangy and tart.

Serving

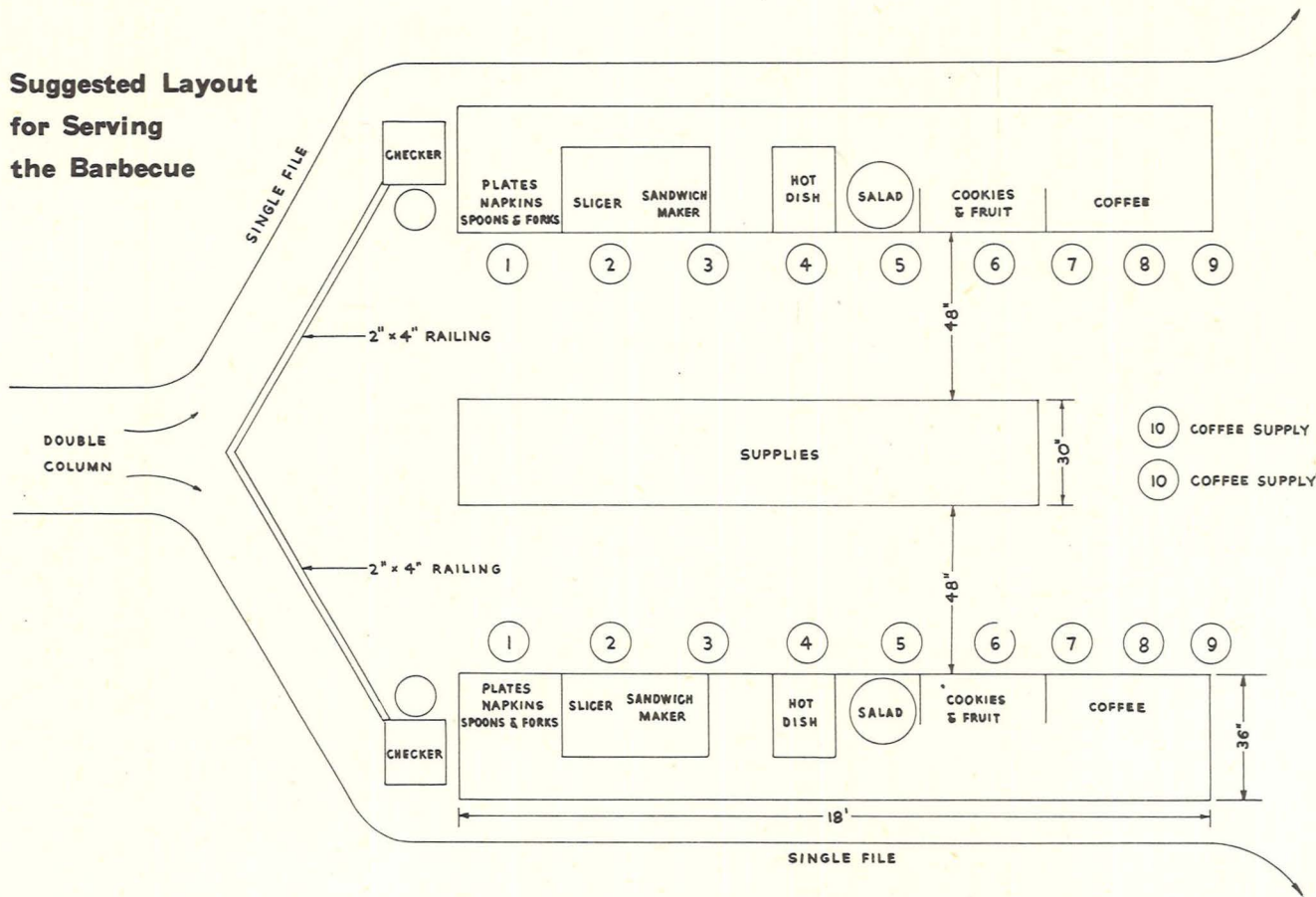
No one phase of the barbecue requires more careful planning and adequate personnel than the serving. It is impossible to set forth a serving plan which will meet all requirements. Each case is an individual one and, in making plans, the natural setting and facilities available must be taken into consideration.

Promptness in serving. From the standpoint of the guest, serve the food promptly at the appointed time and with dispatch. Avoid prolonged waiting in line.

An ordinary line will serve 500 persons per hour. If a crowd of 2,500 is to be served, four lines should be set up so the task can be accomplished in one hour. Select committee members who police the crowd and direct them through the serving lines for their tact and good humor.

Suggested Layout for Serving the Barbecue

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The comfort of the guest also should be considered. When he leaves the serving line he has a paper cup of hot coffee or iced tea in one hand and a well-loaded plate in the other. He cannot eat in a standing position unless he sets down the coffee. Therefore, unless the weather and the ground cover permit sitting on the ground, provide tables and seats.

If fee is charged. There should be adequate cashiers with ample change and a place to work efficiently, if a fee is charged. If possible, the fee should be an amount which can be easily collected and patrons should be encouraged in advance to have exact change. Advance sale of tickets is preferred from the standpoint of simplicity and accuracy in anticipating food requirements.

The serving unit. The serving unit should be set up at a convenient place. It should be planned so that supplies may be replenished without undue cutting through lines of guests being served. The serving tables should be clean and covered with paper.

Use of paper goods. The serving of a barbecue can be greatly facilitated if paper goods are used throughout. China plates and cups are heavy and easily broken, and silverware is lost or carried away. Using paper goods also simplifies the cleanup committee's job.

When meals are served on paper plates, however, special care must be taken to make the foods relatively dry. "Soupy" scalloped potatoes, beans, or cabbage slaw soon soak up the average paper plate, and make it unserviceable.

A nine-inch paper plate, a hot drink cup, a plastic spoon or fork, and a paper napkin comprise a very satisfactory "setup." To save time at serving, the fork or spoon may be wrapped in the napkin.

Serving procedure. The first attendant at the serving table passes out a paper plate, napkin, and plastic spoon and fork.

Next is the meat slicer. A piece of plywood about 2 1/2 feet by 4 feet makes an excellent cutting board. The slicer holds a roll of meat on the plywood with a large cook's fork and slices it. The meat should be sliced across the grain. Electric slicers may be used where available.

Next to the slicer should be one or two persons to make sandwiches. They place the slices of meat in buns and pass them to the guests. In making sandwiches, all scraps of meat should be utilized and not allowed to accumulate.

By all means, the sandwiches should be served as they are made. The sight and aroma of the large chunks of meat being sliced have much appeal. The meat is kept warm and the buns do not become soggy from the meat juice. Usually the buns are not buttered. Tomato base barbecue sauce should be available for guests who desire it.

Next the hot dish, such as beans or scalloped potatoes, should be served. One person can do this. There should be an understanding in advance as to

the size of the serving to be used.

Next the cabbage slaw or salad may be served by another person. One person can serve a cookie or fruit or other dessert.

Serving coffee and iced tea will require about four people. One separates the paper cups, one fills pitchers with coffee and tea, two fill cups from the pitchers. Sugar and half-and-half should be provided. Milk or chocolate milk, in half-pint cartons, is occasionally served to children, in which case straws should be provided.

Use of "island" tables. Sometimes "island" tables are set up at a distance from the main serving tables. At these "islands" the drink and dessert may be served, thus speeding the serving at the main tables. "Island" tables should be set up with salt and pepper, relishes, barbecue sauce, etc.

If ice cream is to be served, it is most desirable to serve it at a special unit. If served with the meal, it usually melts before the guests are ready for it.

Supervisors of serving lines. Over every serving line there should be a supervisor who must be ready to fill in at any position and to help out when "bottlenecks" occur. He should anticipate requirements in ample time so the supply committee can replenish them. Frequently, one serving table may be completely out of some item while other tables may have a surplus; so there should be a liaison man to cope with these situations as they arise. As the crowd begins to wane, it is a good plan to consolidate several lines, thus conserving food and simplifying the cleanup job.

The supervisor will do well to assure his committee (usually volunteer workers) that they will be provided for. He will set aside food for them. If a large number is to be served, provision should be made to relieve the serving personnel from time to time.

All servers should be clean and neat. If possible, they should all be provided with white aprons and caps. They should not be permitted to eat or smoke while on duty.

Supply Committee

There should be a committee to keep the serving tables supplied. The chunks of meat should be removed from the pit with a pitchfork, as needed. They should be placed on a table or box and the burlap wrapping removed. The cuts in their wrappings then should be carried to the slicers in trays or pans.

It is desirable to have available some emergency supplies. Thus sliced bread may be on hand to supplement the bun supply if it should run low. A reserve supply of baked beans may be procured in number ten cans. Canned sweet potatoes, also, may be used as an emergency hot dish. Canned sliced dill pickles are another suggestion. They may be served in place of salad.

Conservation of Leftovers

Immediate action should be taken to conserve leftover supplies. Roasted meat is very perishable, so remaining chunks should be removed from the pit at once and placed under refrigeration. They should be unwrapped and spread out to permit quick and thorough chilling. After chilling, the chunks may be cut up, wrapped in freezer paper, and frozen.

The burlap used for wrapping the meat may be laundered and used again.

Large cartons should be placed at various spots throughout the picnic grounds for the used paper goods. These simplify the work of the cleanup committee.

Coffee and Iced Tea Making

An abundance of good coffee is essential to a successful barbecue. There is a simple way to make good coffee: Fill a 10-gallon cream can two-thirds full of water. Tie two pounds of coffee loosely in a piece of cheesecloth and place in the can of water. Turn steam line into the can until it is full. (This may be done at a creamery or other place where clean steam is available.) Place lid on the can and take it to the barbecue site. Coffee made this way keeps warm for a long time.

Iced tea is very popular. Fill 10-gallon milk cans or other suitable containers with crushed ice. Instant iced tea is the most convenient to make and costs very little. The recipe on the jar will usually make the tea too strong, and adding extra water will actually make better tea. A good way to check the tea is to look at the color and taste it. Brewing tea, using loose tea and straining the tea over the ice is also acceptable. The committee doing the preparation should make the decision as to the method of preparation.