Foodways of Southern Indiana in the Early 20th Century

WINNER OF THE SUE SAMUELSON AWARD FOR FOODWAYS SCHOLARSHIP IN 1993. A CONDITION OF THE PRIZE IS PUBLICATION IN *DIGEST*. BECAUSE THE JOURNAL WAS NOT ACTIVE IN 1993, WE ARE HAPPY TO HAVE A SLIGHTLY REVISED VERSION OF THE PAPER APPEAR NOW.

By: Mary Magoulick

As Michael Owen Jones argues in his 2005 presidential address to the American Folklore Society, food matters. Jones points out that the "procuring, preparing, and consuming of provisions figure largely in symbolic discourse regarding identity, values, and attitudes" and that food reflects our "dynamic . . . multiple identities – ethnic, regional, gendered, or classed," so that we truly are what we eat from various perspectives (Jones 2007:129). Jones demonstrates persuasively the extent to which food metaphors, references, and images infuse culture on many levels. Charles Camp expresses a similar sentiment in the 1980s: "Food matters culturally because it expresses, reflects, and enacts values which are both openly attested to and privately held" (1989:23). Camp also notes a relative paucity of "extensive systematic foodways studies" at the time (1989:17). Approximately two decades ago when I first conducted the research that this article is based on, the cultural importance of food was not as well accepted, and foodways was still considered a lesser cousin to most folklore studies (of stories, art, music, etc.). At the time, I knew that farmers from Southern Indiana, like human beings throughout time and space, had long appreciated food and everything involved in its preparation and consumption. It was integral and fundamental to their community and culture. I originally carried out interviews with Southern Indiana farm women as a final project for a graduate seminar on material culture (taught by Warren Roberts) at Indiana University in 1993. While the fieldwork was initially conducted with a small team examining various aspects of a nearby farming community, I expanded my scope to Southern Indiana. I interviewed four women who grew up at a time when farming and local foods played significant roles. These women; Bertha May Fyffe, Mays Frances, Fern Jewell, and Mary Naylor told me their stories in recorded interviews. They explained their lives (as connected to food) in ways that resonated with and reinforced each other’s stories, and presented lifeways that are less familiar today. All four were friendly and generous with their time and stories, happy to share their early memories centered on food. Portraits of the four women are offered below.

Although today foodways is a more established and rapidly growing field, arguably it still pales in comparison to the popular obsession with and focus on food among the public (although this popularity tends to emphasize gourmet, specialty, or regionally famous foods such as barbeque). In discussing foodways research, Lucy Long notes how folklorists tend to focus more on "simple" foods, which can also "hold complex meanings" (2009:6). She also writes that foodways is, "the aesthetic domain of activities and practices surrounding that stuff" (Long 2009:7). Her comments suggest that even now the foodways of earlier generations of Americans are only minimally studied. For these reasons, along with the ongoing need for more data on folklore of everyday people, I thought this research (even though from twenty years ago) would still be interesting and relevant for contemporary readers.

The interviews I conducted in Southern Indiana in the 1990s reflect foodways (traditions of growing, preparing, and sharing food) as recalled by local women, from their lives in the early twentieth century, just as the industrial revolution was reshaping America. Along with descriptions of how their lives centered around the procurement, preparation, and consumption of food, the four women whose voices I present here reveal many other aspects of their lives as well, which reflect to a great extent the culture of most Americans in the early 20th century.

These four women grew up in what material culture folklore specialist, Warren Roberts, refers to as "that old, traditional way of life" (Roberts 1993). This farm-centered lifestyle gave way to a post-industrial relationship to food as the 20th century progressed, but some people still grew up at least partially connected to these older patterns well into the 20th century. Don Yoder explains that "the revolutionary technological changes of the twentieth century, following the Industrial Revolution, have radically changed cookery and food preparation as well as every phase of everyday living" (1972:346). These changes indeed completely transformed ways of living, yet there are those still alive who remember and reflect on "old foodways," which Yoder affirms "were not so bad after all" (1972:347). These women I interviewed in 1993 lived either on subsistence farms or in lifestyles largely supported by homegrown foods in the early 20th century. All had predominantly fond memories of their early lives. Even though they were of lower to low-middle economic status, their food memories were not of deprivation, hardship, or anything unpleasant, but of a strong and happy home and community life. They didn’t romanticize their youths. They remembered working hard (sometimes very hard), and they experienced the Depression, but they came to realize that even during those difficult times their lives were good, replete with rewarding memories, many of them connected to food. The women fondly recalled things such as the "best cheese" they had ever eaten, or "delicious bacon" after hog butchering day, or treats of homemade popcorn balls shared around a fire at night. Everything connected to food stood out as a bright spot in each life reflected upon here, demonstrating how food often represents a touchstone that helps to crystallize memory.

In his article on "Folk Cookery" Dan Yoder discusses a longstanding and useful method of foodways studies that focuses on: "Folk foods, folk methods of food preparation, the use of foods in the home, the storage of food products, the names of dishes, the meal system—every phase of the relation of food to folk culture" (1972:326). My study incorporates all of these ideas although I collapse some of the categories. I organize my study as follows: 1) Foods grown and consumed in Southern Indiana; 2) Storage and preparation of food; and 3) Food usage and the meal system. This approach provides a foodways-oriented method of comparing proffered descriptions. Additional information emerges in these discussions (such as family relationships, gender issues, and celebrations), but the three categories offer a useful introductory framework for an overview of Southern Indiana foodways. In writing of Yoder’s approach, Lucy Long comments that "Yoder’s discussion of foodways as the totality of customs, beliefs, and habits around food is a system in which all activities bear upon each other, and meaning emerges out of those relationships" (Long 2009:7). As Yoder’s and Long’s statements suggest, food-based studies have the potential to reveal much about life in Southern Indiana a hundred years ago and this present research shows how lives once centered meaningfully around common food traditions that reflected a hard-working but plentifully rewarding life.

Portraits of the Women

Mays Frances (Interviewed March 22, 1993)

Mays Frances (née Blunk) was 85 years old at the time of our interview, a widow with five children, thirteen grandchildren, and twenty-three great-grandchildren. She grew up in the small Southern Indiana town of Monrovia (pop. 375-400 at the time), in the Northwest corner of Morgan County. The daughter of an "implement salesman" in a family of five (including two brothers), some of her family had been in Indiana at least since the Civil War. She graduated from high school and married a man from Mooresville, who was a photographer. After their children were grown, the couple moved to a farm on Maple Grove Road, near Bloomington, Indiana. They farmed this land themselves for about four years. Mays was living in Bloomington at the time of our interview, but she noted that she still attended church at the Maple Grove Road Christian Church.

She remembered her family being able to raise and produce most of their own food. She believed that they were essentially self-sufficient. On their farms they always had chickens, a cow, and pigs. Her family was not wealthy, they did not have a car for instance. They did, however, sometimes have "hired girls," since her mother was frequently too ill to do her work. Although Mays and her family bought more of their food than my other consultants, they nevertheless considered store bought food, such as hot dogs, a big treat. They did not have enough room to grow much corn but they grew many vegetables in their yard in town.

Bertha May Fyffe (Interviewed March 16, 1993)

Bertha May Fyffe grew up in the Maple Grove Road area of Southern Indiana, and married a man who also lived there. Her family had lived and farmed in this area for several generations. At the time of our interview, she still lived in the farmhouse of her husband’s family, which she moved to after their marriage. She no longer was working the farm at the time, and instead rented it out to be farmed. But she still raised a garden for herself. She was a widow with six children, who all lived within thirty miles of Maple Grove Road. She said she saw them frequently. Her house was large for one person (she agreed), with a living room, two bedrooms, a small kitchen and a large dining room, where we had our meeting (with two other members of our graduate student interviewing team).

Since several of us were interested in interviewing Bertha, we decided to make it easier on her by interviewing her just once, with all three of us sharing the interview and posing questions relevant to our projects (mine was the only one on foodways). We interviewed Bertha on a cold, cloudy day, at around 2:30 in the afternoon. Judi Hetrick, Hande Birkelan and I sat around a table, while Bertha stood the entire time. She seemed relaxed and she talked freely and laughed a lot during the interview.

L. Fern Jewell (Interviewed March 19, 1993)

Fern Jewell grew up on a farm that her great, great grandfather established in the 1800s in Owen County, Indiana, a mile west of Whitehall, near the Gross cemetery and school. Fern was born and lived on this farm for twenty-four years. Her ancestors moved to this region from South Carolina, and settled on what they called "Little Raccoon Creek," which ran through the farm. Jewell is Fern's married name; her parents were named Freeman. She believed their ancestors originally moved to this country from England and Holland. She grew up with a fairly small family on the farm, her parents, two brothers, and one grandfather. She was twice widowed and had two daughters and several grandchildren still living in Bloomington (at the time of these interviews), and she had a son who died in the Vietnam War.

Fern's family farm was mostly self-sufficient and thus represents the "old, traditional way of life." She always enjoyed and paid attention to food and foodways, and she spoke in a fluid, natural way that required little prompting. She offered many details and elaborated about her youth and memories of farm life. Initially she was nervous about being recorded on tape, so she merely recited things she had thought up in advance to tell me. We had spoken a few days before the interview about many of the things we discussed on tape, and at that time I asked her if I might come back for a formal, recorded interview. Eventually, as our interview continued, she relaxed into the process. She was a little hard of hearing, so I had to repeat a number of my questions, and she sometimes repeated a few things or asked me follow-up questions as she answered. I interviewed her in her living room (in the same building where I lived, in a separate apartment of her house).

Mary Naylor (Interviewed March 24, 1993)

Mary Naylor was eighty-three years old at the time of our interview and a long term resident on her farm on Kinser Pike Road, near the Maple Grove Road community. A widow with four children, she was the daughter of Charles and Rose Fowler. Her father came to Indiana from Scotland when he was twelve and worked as a stonecutter. Her mother was born and raised in Steinsville, Indiana. Mary grew up in this general area, and she attended college at Indiana University, receiving a bachelor's degree in home economics. Hence she was something of a professional at food preparation and storage on several fronts. She tended her own garden all her life, and continued to do so when we talked. She had also produced a cookbook of all her and her family's favorite recipes, which she distributed to her children and ten grandchildren for Christmas one year (she also gave me a copy, along with several kinds of cookies she served during our interview).

Mary was still living in the farm house that she and her husband built, and one of her sons still worked the farm there at that time. As we conducted the interview there, I can confirm that the house is in a beautiful location of rolling hills and big old trees. One could see the vegetable/flower garden and bird feeders from the kitchen and dining room windows, where Mary told me she spent most of her time. In 1993 she had been going to Maple Grove Road Christian Church for about forty-eight years. I met her and three of the other women (all but Fern Jewell) through the church, where four of us students attended services as a means of meeting members of the community for our fieldwork projects. Mary's answers tended to be short and to the point. She had a wry, understated sense of humor. Her little dog Andy was also very friendly. The interview began with Mary telling me about a number of photographs she had laid out for the interview. They were mostly to do with the church. She also showed me the cookbook she wrote at the outset and continued telling me about various people in the photographs until we eventually got to the subject of food (through one photo of a woman named Iris Strange, who was the church historian and a good cook).

After our interview had terminated (and my tape recorder was turned off), Mary told me other interesting things including that her family did a little hunting, though they were usually too tired from farming to do much, she said. But they sometimes hunted rabbits and squirrels, which Mary might help skin. She said they didn't hunt deer, beavers, or coyotes. They also sometimes fished in Bean Blossom Creek (very near her house) and sometimes in Griffey Lake, which is not too far away. She also told me her Grandmother had a recipe that called for "ten cents worth of flour, fifteen cents worth of sugar, etc., and four eggs if they're running high, and six if they're running cheap!"

In transcribing all these interviews, I indicate as much of the mood of our conversations as possible (indicating laughter, significant gestures, etc. in square brackets), and I attempt to render some minimal "ethnopoetic" transcription when the speech flows or breaks through into performance mode (becomes more rhythmic and fluid). Most of the transcriptions are, however, in block prose, indicating that the speech was more explanatory, conversational, or factual. The interviews are nonetheless peppered with local expressions, moments of excitement, and fun stories or events remembered especially fondly.

Foods Grown and Consumed in Southern Indiana

Warren Roberts distinguishes two primary regional foodways categories as "hardwood" and "softwood" (1993). According to Roberts, "hardwood regions" depend on pork and grain, because the terrain of forests is better for pigs than for dairy animals (so the staple protein is preserved pork products). In contrast, "softwood areas" favor milk products (and preserved forms of milk, such as hard cheese) because the meadows allow for abundant dairy animals. Since everyone I interviewed here had pigs (since pigs can't survive in softwood areas) and since most of these women remembered having very little cheese (nor sometimes even milk), we can classify Southern Indiana as a hardwood area. They also all remembered growing corn and grain, which is another characteristic of hardwood areas. Yet everyone I interviewed also had cows, and some even had goats and sheep. But they did not use their milk primarily to make hard cheese products to sustain them through the winter. Dairy cows in Southern Indiana served two purposes. Some of my consultants made butter and/or cottage cheese, and all used milk and cream to drink (at least at times). Most of them also sold excess milk or butter to make money.

In one case where they did make cheese (though soft rather than the more durable hard cheese), Fern Jewell remembered fondly her mother making cottage cheese:

> Mary: Did you make cheese?
>
> Fern: Oh yes, my mother made a lotta cheese. She waited until the milk was clabbered, soured, and ah, then she…
>
> Mary: So then you'd just milk the cow and let it sit in a big pan?
>
> Fern: Do what?
>
> Mary: To sour it, did you just let the milk sit in a pan some…
>
> Fern: Well, we had crocks.
>
> Mary: Oh.
>
> Fern: That we'd put them in, our milk, and um whenever one of them would sour on us, and they'd just be in chunks, kinda in chunks you know. And then she says, 'Well, we'll just have some cottage cheese.' She would pour this into a pan, or stirrer, and then she would set it on the back of her wood range, just get it warm enough to, to make it curdle, right. So that after it's been on the stove for a good long while, she would stick her finger in and see how hot it's getting, every once in a while, cause she could test it that away. And then whenever it was ready, she would pour it into a sieve, or ah, colander, what she called it, and let it set and drain, for a good long while, maybe all afternoon. And then she would take the cottage cheese out and put ah, cream on it, and sometimes pepper and salt, or whatever seasons you would want on it, and it was really good, the cottage cheese was. It's better than your boughten cheese.
>
> Mary: Oh, I'm sure. How much would she make at a time?
>
> Fern: She'd make a big bowl full, for a meal, a good sized bowl full. Course, there was three of us children, and our grandfather lived with us, so that made six of us, and they had to have a big bowl full, for us. *[laughs]*
>
> Mary: Yeah.
>
> Fern: 'Course, we really enjoyed our cottage cheese, homemade cottage cheese,
>
> I don't know how, I guess farmers still make them, nowadays I don't know. I nev, I haven't talked to any farmers lately. *[laughs]*

> Mary: Yeah.
>
> Fern: To see if they make them.

Fern's family was unique among my consultants for their cheese-making. But as she stated, other people made cheese around here also, and some may still do so, she imagined.

Mays Frances's family also owned dairy cows usually. When I asked her whether her family made anything out of the milk, she only remembered them having made butter:

> Mary: Did you make stuff ever out of the milk, like cheese?
>
> Mays: Uh, not too much, because we sold it, but ah, always tried to keep out enough milk to have cream for cereal and coffee. . . So we wasn't without milk and cream, and at one time I churned butter, with an old fashioned, what they called 'the daisy churn' it was a glass churn, about a gallon. It had a wheel on top and a handle, and that way we got our butter, and at one time I did churn on what is called a "dash churn," a wooden churn, . . .it had a dasher in there and churned with that *[up and down motion gestured]*.

Thus Mays's family did less with their milk than Fern's, although she had clear memories of their butter churn, a material culture item that produced a relative luxury for the family's consumption.

When I asked Mary Naylor what she and her family did with their milk, she answered that they only drank what they needed, and sold the rest:

> Mary M: How about, did you have dairy cows, and what did you make from the milk?
>
> Mary N: Yes, well, nothing particular.
>
> Mary M: Butter.
>
> Mary N: No, we sold our milk.
>
> Mary M: Oh, did you ever make any cottage cheese?
>
> Mary N: Nope.
>
> Mary M: But you had, you kept enough to drink for yourself?
>
> Mary N: Oh yes uh hunh, and believe it or not I raised four kids on cows' milk.
>
> Mary M: How many did it take? Did you just have one or two?
>
> Mary N: Oh no, we had ah, I think at one time we had about 18, but they sold them down to about twelve, I think. I expect it's about twelve which we usually *[had]*…

> Mary M: So you, if you wanted butter you bought it?
>
> Mary N: Oh yes, uh hunh, couldn't be bothered with butter.
>
> Mary M: Did you buy cheese sometimes too?
>
> Mary N: Oh yes, with a crock full of cottage cheese, big crock full.
>
> Mary M: Mmm, sounds yummy, so at the same creamery where you sold your milk?
>
> Mary N: Yeah, mm hmm.

Everyone I interviewed had dairy cows and used their milk, at least to drink, and often to sell. However, only some did more with the milk, perhaps using it to make butter or cottage cheese, suggesting that other milk products, like cheese, were considered unnecessary to their diet or that milk was worth more to sell than to use themselves.

In contrast, and in keeping with a hardwood region diet, everyone I interviewed butchered hogs and used that meat as a primary protein during the winter. Everyone had rich stories to tell about hog butchering day but Bertha Fyffe and Fern Jewell had especially strong memories of it. Bertha's recalled:

> OH! The neighbors all came in, there was what I call a little ‘clip’ of them, but they all butchered. Benny Wisnand, ... Irish Stanger, ... and Carl Stanger, ... and Grandpa, ... those in particular were the ones that did the most butchering, and they'd all get together, now sometimes there might be somebody else, depending on who lived up here where Sherzer's did. If somebody else lived up there who butchered, why they'd be in on it too, but there'd be at least them, which'd be, at least seven men, and the women usually came too, about probably five or six women, and uh, they'd be getting dinner, and they'd go out and start butchering their hogs and um, string them up. And they usually'd count on the tenderloin for lunch. They tried to get a hog killed and cooled out enough so they could get a tenderloin for lunch, cause it was on a cold day when they butchered, and then after ah their dinner. ‘Course we called the noon meal their dinner, and the evening meal was supper, that's the way the farmers always called it. And ah, the women'd hurry up and do up their dishes, or maybe one or two'd stay in the kitchen and clean up things, and the rest of them'd go down to the wash house. And they had tables and things down there, they'd start bringing, cutting the hogs up, bringing them in. The women'd start cutting, trimming the fat off, cutting them up, and ah, we had a great big, great big kettle, bout like that *[gesturing]*. It's up at Mattie's now *[her daughter]*, and um, we build a fire, great big kettle under it we'd build a fire, and that's what they rendered their lard in. And ah, when they got the fat all trimmed off, cut up, why they'd throw it in this big kettle, and ah, they'd cut out the hams, and the sides, everything trim it all off. And ah, if they got to it, they'd even wrap some of their hams and things like that, for sugar curing. Then ah, scrappy stuff,

> they would ah, throw that in the tub, 'til the salt came out, and then when they got it all trimmed off, why they'd grind that for their sausage and make their sausage out of that. And the women helped as well as the men, when it came to that part of it, and they'd kindled their fire. 'Course you'd a had fire in there anyway, and we'd kindle them for a little bit a heat, and they'd um, render their lard, and when it got, they thought rendered out enough, why, they'd dip it out, and strain it into, years ago, it was just big stone jars. Then they got to where they got some lard cans, tin lard cans, strain it into that, and squeeze the, all the fat out of the meat, and that was your cracklins, and they'd start eating their cracklins *[laughs]*. So it was just an all day job for all of them.

Besides the details of hog butchering, this passage contains important information about the strength of the community. Hog butchering was a very difficult, "all day job," perhaps impossible without many hands to help. Yet in reminiscing about the day, she still exhibited excitement at what a grand day it was with so many in the community coming together to share in both the labor and the meals and "treats" (like fried pork skin cracklins). This supports Roberts's assertion that the "old traditional way of life" depended upon and supported the community (F540 seminar notes, 1993). Whoever came to help slaughter the hog(s) would in turn be helped when they were ready to butcher. These hog butchering days stand out in her memory as special.

Fern Jewell's memories of butchering day were also detailed:

> Mary: How many hogs would they butcher on one day?
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> Fern: Well, my father generally just butchered one hog a day.
>
> Mary: And that would last you the whole year?
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> Fern: Well, yeah, 'course, other families might have butchered more, probably did, if they had bigger families. But that would do us through the winter, then, and up in the summer where we had a can, and the meat that we canned, when we opened up, the day that we opened it up, was fresh just like it'd been butchered that day.

Again, "hog butchering day was a big event," and Fern shares an enduring memory of an exciting event. We see again the dependence upon neighbors (both men and women) that was typical of this lifestyle. It is interesting that Fern's family of six only needed one hog to get through the winter yet Bertha remembered her somewhat larger family sometimes killed "ten to eleven hogs at a time, and it was a big day." It is unclear whether she meant that they killed hogs for everyone who came to help, or whether they killed that many just for their own family, but the former is more likely, since one hog lasted most people a long time.

Both women remembered that many parts of the hogs were used as food. Everyone I interviewed made hams and bacon, by sugar/salt curing, and in most cases by smoking with hickory wood as well. They also all made sausage (with "spare parts" and "scraps"), mince meat pie (with the head meat), and ate the liver first. I did not find anyone who used the hoofs, tail or brain (though in some other cultures this was common; and it may be that since they were children they did not pay attention to all such details – especially if they did not eat those parts). Fern remembered as well that the dogs got some of the scraps: "If they was any dogs around, they had a nice feast. They generally was some there to help themselves to, and cats." Another important part of hog butchering day was devoted to rendering lard. All of my consultants remembered using lard as their primary source of fat for all of their cooking, baking and frying. Lard might be stored separately, or used to seal pork or sausage in its container. Bacon grease and other drippings were also saved and used in a variety of ways. The practical, economic use of the whole animal is notable, as is the predominantly celebratory feel of the day.

Besides pork and its by-products, all of my consultants depended heavily upon vegetables and fruits that they grew and gathered. Everyone canned significant portions of their garden crops. This was especially true for tomatoes and green beans but they grew a large variety of foods, and canned as many as possible. Fern remembered most about her father's farm:

> When he *[my father]* planted in the fields, he would rotate his crops, from year to year, generally maybe two years a corn field, and then the next two years, it'd be a clover field, or maybe a wheat field, two more years, or something like that. And that is not sapping the ground out of ah, just any. If you just keep one crop in, all the time, it would sap the ground out until the corn wouldn't be very big or very nice. In the corn field, we put our pole beans, plant them in there. We'd plant pumpkins in the corn field.
>
> In the summer, course we had a big garden, which was, consisted of lettuce, and radishes, and celery, um, carrots, and peas, and green beans, and corn, and tomatoes. Of course we canned a lot of those things, to preserve them for the winter. And then in August, why he put out a big turnip patch, with radishes and lettuce sow'd in with them.
>
> He just brought, cast the seed.
>
> And, we had a lot of turnips then for the winter months, see, and he put out a big patch a potatoes, every winter, which we would, that would be separate from the garden, cause he put out a lot of potatoes; we used a lot of potatoes.
>
> And we had to dig those in the fall of the year, o' course, before the ground would freeze, ‘cause the potatoes would freeze if we didn't get them out.

Obviously, Fern's family enjoyed a wide variety of vegetables and she emphasized with pride that her father was a skilled farmer. He rotated his crops properly and planted foods together in beneficial ways, such as letting the beans climb up the corn stalks and putting the potatoes in a separate patch. She painted the picture of this as a good and plentiful way of life.

This variety of vegetables was apparent in the memories shared by all of my interviewees. Mary Naylor also remembered details of what they planted, and of what they gathered:

> Oh, we had uh potatoes and tomatoes and beans and sweet potatoes, and carrots and parsnips and lettuce and radishes and cabbage, everything.
>
> Mary M: And how much of it did you can?
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> Mary N: Well, when I was home or when I got married?
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> Mary M: Well, both.
>
> Mary N: Well, canned green beans, and after we got freezers we froze our corn and our peas and um, Papa didn't like mangos so I just put them in as flowers *[laughs]*, and um
>
> Mary M: But you grew mangos?
>
> Mary N: Yeah, not the fruit mango, the vegetable mango, and uh, cabbage, and I guess I've tried to can about all of it.
>
> Mary M: Wow, you can can cabbage?
>
> Mary N: Mm hmm.
>
> Mary M: You just cook it up first and put it in?
>
> Mary N: Mm hmm.
>
> Mary M: And um, did you have fruits too?
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> Mary N: Oh yes, I still have the same family strawberry plants I had forty years ago! *[laughs]* I just move them from patch to patch. It gets too weedy I just move it, instead of trying to get the weeds out of it, you move it.
>
> Mary M: And what else besides strawberries?
>
> Mary N: Oh I've had apples and I've canned peaches and I've canned pears, I canned pineapple way back and plums.
>
> Mary M: Were there other berries that you went out and collected?
>
> Mary N: Blackberries, and raspberries.
>
> Mary M: Do you still can these things?

> Mary N: Well, I make jelly out of raspberries, ‘cause I don't like the seeds. And I freeze blackberries now.

Much of Mary's experience corresponds with the memories of the other women. Everyone seemed to have canned just about everything they could, and everyone ate many vegetables and fruit, fresh during the summer, stored potatoes, turnips and apples, and canned vegetables during the winter. They also all went out to gather fruits such as raspberries and blackberries, which they either preserved in jams or jellies or canned.

Although gathering fruit could be difficult, as both Mays and Fern remembered, fruit seems to have been an important supplement to the Southern Indiana diet. Mays's memories of collecting fruits illustrate its importance:

> We only had three acres, we lived right in town, but Dad had a big garden. And ah, he was going to put out some fruit trees, and Mom said, "I want a gooseberry bush." Well my father, not being satisfied with one gooseberry bush, he bought six. *[laughter]* We all got sick of gooseberries *[laughter]*, cause they was the hardest things to pick.
>
> Mary: Oh really?
>
> Mays: Yeah, you know for each gooseberry there was two thorns.
>
> Mary: Ohh.
>
> Mays: And ah, them things can really stick *[laughter]* But he raised a big crop of potatoes and onion...
>
> Mary: Did you can fruits too?
>
> Mays: Yes, canned peaches and apples and plums, and course Mother did that too.
>
> Mary: Any berries?
>
> Mays: Uh hunh, if someone'll pick them. I won't pick berries. Last time I picked berries I had as many chiggers as I had berries and I said "it's not worth it to me!"
>
> Mary: And then what do you do with the canned fruit?
>
> Mays: We put them in a, we didn't have a cellar. We had a closet, an inside wall, closet. We put them in there. Now I put mine in the bottom of the hall, linen closet. But when we lived on the farm we had a cellar. We'd can them and put them in the cellar.
>
> Mary: On Maple Grove Road?

> Mays: Uh hunh, that'd take care of, you know, they'd keep cool and not get too cold or too hot in the wintertime.
>
> Mary: How 'bout, did you have any apple trees?
>
> Mays: Yes, we had apple trees and cherry trees, and I can't remember plum trees. We had what they called "transparent apples" and I haven't seen a transparent apple for years.
>
> Mary: Was it really transparent?
>
> Mays: They were about that big around, and they were real light green and sweet and they were just a delicious raw apple. Now a lot of people like those Granny Smith, and I don't like them, they're too sour…

The common thread in all these memories is that there were plenty of vegetables and fruit in these diets. Fern's family similarly canned and ate a lot of fruit; including apples, cherries, grapes, plums, and strawberries which they grew, and blackberries and raspberries which they picked. Fern told of one time when it was so hot while they were picking that when her mother returned and drank too much water, she was sick from heat exhaustion and could not can the berries until the next day. Although it required significant effort (including potentially getting pricked while picking or sick from effort), it appears to have been worth it to most families. Most women also remembered pickling cucumbers and beets.

Southern Indiana allowed hard working farmers an impressive amount and variety of fruits and vegetables, which all of these women remembered consuming throughout the year. Don Yoder quotes James Watt Raine's discussion of the perceived poverty and monotony of the Appalachian diet, which in many respects is very similar to the Southern Indiana diet:

> The average cooking is bad and renders the food unwholesome. *[…]* The range of foodstuffs is far too narrow for good health. 'Bread' and 'meat' are the staples of diet. This means corn and pork. The poorest renter or squatter plans to 'raise me a crap' or to 'raise me some bread' by which is always meant corn. And usually he slaughters a hog or two for his 'meat.' This, salted and sometimes smoked, provides the necessary supply of bacon, 'ham-meat,' and lard. A family with a supply of bread and meat faces the winter without anxiety. At least they will not starve. If further provender can be laid up, so much the better. They may 'hole up' in the garden a pyramid of potatoes, another of cabbage, and another of turnips, and dig them out when the larder runs low (Raine 1924 quoted in Yoder 1972:333).

Raine's view seems very pejorative and Yoder counters it by quoting other authorities that document the steady decrease in health of such communities once "superior" outside food is brought in to replace this "restricted diet." In other words, Yoder shows that condemnations of the pre-industrial diet like

Raine’s were inaccurately biased. While Southern Indiana may have been a better climate than Appalachia for some produce, in other respects it seems that most residents here enjoyed the same "unwholesome" diet as described by Raine, and shown by Yoder to in fact have been quite healthy. This reveals the potential narrow-mindedness of outsiders, even some of those examining foodways. It may also reflect a fairly common bias against rural life in the post-industrial age, when many outsiders were quick to pass judgment on all aspects of rural and farming lifestyles. The women I interviewed shared overwhelmingly positive memories and testimonials of their good lives. They refuted much of the negative assessment of their diet voiced by earlier critics like Raine. Without exception, and without hesitation, these women affirmed that they had wonderful diets, full of delicious food (for which they give ample specific details), that they never went hungry, and that they never found themselves deprived or unhealthy.

In fact, my study indicates that these mostly self-sustaining farmers consumed plenty of vegetables all year round. While they also seem to have eaten a substantial amount of high cholesterol foods, such as lard, pork, butter and eggs, they were not without vegetables or variety. It is thus unclear whether their diet was healthier or unhealthier than that of most Americans today. Further study, with a different purpose and scope than mine, would be necessary to determine such conclusions. But at least Southern Indiana farmers were eating plenty of vegetables and fruits, and probably less sugar than most of us today (since they would have had to purchase or trade for it). They consumed virtually no chemical pesticides or fertilizers (since this was before most such were available). In light of this, it seems easy to accept the attitude all the women here proffer in their stories, that their Southern Indiana foodways merit praise.

Besides pork, milk, fruits and vegetables, most of my consultants grew and consumed corn, often thought of as a quintessential American food and a prime product of Indiana agriculture. They used corn in various ways. Mays's family, who lived in town, did not have enough land to grow much corn, certainly not enough for corn meal. Mary Naylor's family did not particularly care for corn bread although they ate and canned plenty of fresh corn. Bertha's family always had corn meal stocked in their "meal room." Finally, Fern's family loved corn bread, ate it every day, and were fairly particular about which corn to use for their meals; they preferred white corn to grind. In addition to human consumption, everyone used substantial amounts of corn to feed their animals and there was a special variety of "field corn" grown for feeding livestock.

Only two of my four consultants actually enjoyed corn bread; Bertha and Fern remembered it fondly. The other two, Mary and Mays, did not enjoy or did not often make corn bread. They preferred or ate other grain foods, such as oatmeal or "light bread" (store bought wheat bread). Perhaps this shows the effects of industrialization since all of my consultants, although elderly at the time of our interviews, were born in the 20th century into an industrialized world. While they remembered many of the old foodways, they nonetheless valued and enjoyed the new ease, convenience and perhaps prestige of some store bought goods. Also both Mary and Mays reported that their fathers disliked corn bread which may explain why they did not come to enjoy it or make it much themselves.

In many ways, Fern Jewell, who grew up furthest from a "big town" and apparently in the most self-sustaining lifestyle of any of my consultants, seemed to have lived more closely than the others to the old traditional way of life. Her memories of corn and corn bread are very positive:

> The corn was for horses, and, our cattle that we had, and sheep and chickens and things that we had on the farm, the corn was. ‘Course we used it to grind if it was white corn.
>
> And sometimes we didn't have white corn. We'd take it to a neighbor and trade corn, the yellow corn for the white corn, so we could have it for our corn meal. *[laughs]*
>
> Mary: Uh huh, white corn is more tasty?
>
> Fern: Well, we liked the white corn better than we did the yellow corn, some people liked the yellow corn the best, but which some had planted, they liked the yellow corn to grind for corn meal. We sometimes did, if we didn't get a chance to trade it for white corn, we went ahead and had it grind… And then the evening meal, we generally had beans left from the noon meal, anthen we had corn bread, and we *[had]* our, ah, milk. We'd eat, big hunks of corn bread in our milk, and eat that corn bread and milk together.
>
> Mary: Mmmm.
>
> Fern: We liked that real good.
>
> Mary: Yeah it sounds good! *[Fern and I laugh]*
>
> Fern: Oh yes, we had corn bread, we had corn bread every day *[laughs]*. That was a must around our house.

Corn was an important part of the crops and diets of everyone I interviewed. But Fern most clearly represented what was apparently an old, traditional pattern in Indiana and much of the United States, depending on corn to make bread and other staples of meals.

Although Fern may represent an older pattern in foodways, her family, like everyone I interviewed, also used wheat flour in their diets. Since Roberts believes wheat flour was not available before industrialization to most Americans (Roberts 1993), this may represent a post-industrial modernization of the Southern Indiana diet. Many of my consultants used wheat flour on a daily basis for biscuits. Many of them also bought bread or crackers regularly. Wheat flour was used for pie crusts, cobblers, and cakes, which all of my consultants remember having regularly.

Such desserts necessitated another item that was not grown in Southern Indiana: sugar. It is hard to know how desserts were sweetened before industrialization. Perhaps sugar was always available for trade. But Fern Jewell described a variety of sweeteners that her family was able to grow and store, including maple sugar and syrup, honey and sorghum molasses:

> We had, ah, around 300 trees which we tapped for maple syrup. My father would take a drill and drill a hole into the maple trees, and put a spike in, to drip into five gallon buckets, which would make a maple, the sweet water, that he'd carry, or haul, to the sugar house, put them in big barrels, kind of up on a bank, and put a pipe down to his sugar house, to make the syrup. The furnace was a long furnace, and they had two pans on it, on top of it, to boil down the syrup. It'd take fifty gallons of sap water to make one gallon of maple syrup. They had to work about all day, on just one or two gallons of syrup, because it took us so long to boil down. And ah, this was generally in February and March, when the ground is, freezing at night, and it's thawing out through the daytime. And that makes a good run, whenever it's real muddy, the trees would run real good.
>
> Mary: They've got more water in them?
>
> Fern: They, well, whenever the ground thaws out, the sap goes up, and then when the sap goes up, of course then the water'll come out, or the, sugar water comes out, if it, *[thought not completed]*. Then we had honey bees, which my father took care of. He had to, ah, rob them once a year. "Rob them" means you took the honey outta the hives. So that we could have honey to eat. And then he'd do that earlier in the summer, where the bees would have time to remake honey for the winter, to store for them to eat on. Then we had sorghum, which they bring in their cane, which they cut from their fields, and it'd be ground, the cane would be ground, and we'd take the juice off the cane stalks and boil it down like we would the maple syrup, in big pans. I forgot how many gallon of syrup, sap would take to make a gallon of sorghum, but ah…Wanna hear about the barn raising…
>
> Mary: So, was it always your father that got the honey?
>
> Fern: *[She asks me to clarify]* How would he get the honey?
>
> Mary: Yeah.
>
> Fern: He had a smoker, that he would smoke the bees a little bit, so that they wouldn't be a swarming on him, but he'd cover his face and ah, with a cloth, a thin cloth. He hardly ever got stung, but you know, it takes certain people to do that kind of work I guess.
>
> Mary: Yeah.

Fern: ‘Cause, some people would be stung to death, and they couldn't stand those stings.

But it didn't bother him if he did get sting'd once in a while.

But, ah, he enjoyed working with them, and taking the honey out.

Their honey was on racks, in the honey hives.

You'd pull up the rack and cut out the honey, out of them.

‘Cause honey, and the honeycomb, see you get the comb, then they would make more, for their winter store…

Mary: So when you make sorghum, you know you cut it down and then you boil it, is that how you do it?

Fern: It was, we'd grind the um, it's sorghum cane is a whole lots like a corn shock you know?

Mary: Mm hmm.

Fern: And we'd take those shocks and we'd put them through a grinder, and the juice come out of the shock, I mean of the stalk, not a shock, a stalk, and ah, we'd take the juice then and boil it down like we do the maple sugar. We just have these big pans, big pans, they'd be about that high *[gestures]*.

Mary: About four or five inches?

Fern: Yeah, something like that, and have four, five pans about that wide.

Mary: Couple feet.

Fern: Lined up and, and we dip them from one to the other. Us kids we really had it nice, we had a little paddle, just about as long as this spoon and we could dip off, the foam off the top of that, maple syrup, or this sorghum and eat it. It was real sweet of course, and good.

Mary: Oh, wow.

Fern: After it almost was done, you know, there was foam up on it. We had a good time, and ah…

Mary: What did the end product of the sorghum look like? … Was it hard?

> Fern: Well, like molasses, do you ever?
>
> Mary: Yeah.
>
> Fern: Did you not eat molasses?
>
> Mary: Uh hunh, yeah.
>
> Fern: Did you not eat any sorghum?
>
> Mary: It's just, is it dark brown like molasses too?
>
> Fern: Yeah, uh hunh, its uh hunh, it's generally dark brown.
>
> Mary: How do you store it?
>
> Fern: We have great big long paddles we stir it with, uh, if you, and ah…
>
> Mary: How do you store it afterwards?
>
> Fern: We just put them in buckets, and cans, while it's still hot you see, and ah, seal them, and they stay good, then, course sometimes, ah, sorghum'll sugar on us, if we get it too done. Sometimes you get a batch too done or something, it'll sugar on us. But you can always take it out and heat it again. So…
>
> Mary: If it sugars, that means it crystallizes?
>
> Fern: I guess we cooked it too much. That's what they seemed to think…that it was cooked too long, like you do cook your beans or something *[laughs]*, you know, that away.

Fern's clear memory and description of the processing of all these sweeteners suggest that this was an important and annual event of life on her family's farm. It seems probable that most people may have been able to thus provide enough various sweeteners for most of their needs in pre-industrial times, at least in this region. Everyone I talked to was familiar with these three items as potential sweeteners, and everyone remembered having made at least sorghum, at some time (even Mays who lived in town). Yet everyone also remembered buying or trading for refined sugar.

Sugar and flour were not the only foods bought or traded for. Herbs, spices, and salt were also routinely needed, and no one I talked to remembered growing any herbs. Other special treats were often bought or bartered as well. Some of my consultants bought bread, crackers, butter, cheese, candy, chocolate, popcorn, peanut butter, rice and other items difficult for them to produce in Southern Indiana. Others made their own bread, grew their own popcorn, made their own candy, butter and cottage cheese (at least at times). It is difficult to know which traded items would have been available before industrialization. But since all written accounts I have read of pre-industrial self-sustaining folklife (such as Laura Ingalls Wilder, who published in 1920s and 30s, but whose stories reflect her family's homesteading life in the Midwest mostly in the 1870s and 1880s) also mention trading for specialty foods or treats occasionally, we can surmise that throughout the United States trade was a part of life from the time of European settlement. Salt in particular would have been necessary to everyone in Southern Indiana, in order to preserve foods, and I heard of no one here who mined salt. These women grew up in the transitional period when the more convenient and desirable products of post-industrialization were more readily available to them, and they took advantage of these products when possible. But their longest and fondest descriptions of how they produced and consumed food in their youths rest on the locally produced goods. Buying foods to supplement that diet was expensive and thus uncommon; trading was more common, but not always reliably possible.

Once again, I turn to Fern Jewell as spokesperson for the women's connection to a traditional lifestyle. She explained the details of how they traded for or bought items either from town or from the peddler:

> Eggs, when we'd get eggs, we'd take them and trade for groceries at the market, or at the grocery store, we ah, done that, sometimes we wouldn't have very many chickens, two or three dozen, sometimes we'd have around three hundred. During depression we didn't have very many chickens. And we'd used our eggs to eat, and trade for the food we'd need, like salt and sugar and things that we couldn't, didn't have on the farm.
>
> Mary: Mm, hmm.
>
> Fern: Things like that, and then, there was one or two summers that we had a peddler come through the country, ah, he had a big truck, closed in truck, and he had groceries on it. Ah, my brother and I we'd grab an old hen, and go to the road and trade our hens for groceries, for like you know, like sugar, and flour and lard, if we didn't, most of the time we had our own lard, though, cause we all butchered, and we rendered, rendered lard, from our hogs.
>
> Mary: Mm hmm.
>
> Fern: And we didn't have much to buy, I mean on, on lard, but we did buy sugar and flour and salt and things like that, spices, if we want spices, like cinnamon, or spice, cloves, or something like that we would trade our hens for that. They, he had a big, ah, cage on the back of his truck that he put his hens in that he got from other people or from us, ah…
>
> Mary: *[laughs]*
>
> Fern: *[also laughs]* to carry back to where he was going home…

Mary: Wow.

Fern: He had quite a few things on the truck that we could use, that we would meet him.

We could hear him coming from over the hill.

It was a real steep hill, over Whitehall,

He'd have his horn that he had on his *[truck]*.

Mary: Ohh.

Fern: And then he had a bell, that he'd ring,

And we could hear that bell a long ways,

And that'd give my brother and I time to get to the road ‘cause we lived back off the road, a little piece.

Mary: Ohh.

Fern: Now, we could see the road, yet it was, oh I would say, three or four blocks off the road, we lived, and we had to get over to the road to catch him then.

He'd be always watching for us.

We had big times with that. *[grinning]*

Mary: *[laughs]*

Fern: Once in a while, I don't know whether you ever saw a twin loaf of bread or not?

Mary: Unh unh. *[shaking my head no]*

Fern: Well they had twin loaf of bread.

It'd be dipped in the middle and over like this. *[gesturing]*

You know, a loaf of bread, we'd call it twin loaf.

And in this twin loaf they would be a stick a candy, ah…

Mary: Ohh!

> Fern: Ah *[smiling]*, once in a while our mother let us get a twin loaf of bread and we had a stick of candy to divide between us, we was really rich, because that was, that was really a treat to us.
>
> Mary: *[laughing]*
>
> Fern: *[also laughing]* One stick of candy, and my brother and I would divide it! We was so happy over that candy, ‘cause we hardly ever got candy. *[laughs]*
>
> Mary: Uh hunh, wow.
>
> Fern: We, really had a good time with that, we made it last as long as we could *[we both laugh]* ‘cause we know'd we wouldn't get any for a while.

Again, these memories of a farm-focused lifestyle are happy (as evidenced in all the laughter her story provoked for her). She remembered how special and enjoyable an "outside" treat felt and how precious such items seemed. Yet she did not express negative feelings about what from her current perspective might seem to have been a deprived childhood (largely deprived of luxury items). This too is a common feeling among these women. They expressed no remorse or bad feelings about how they lived and ate growing up, rather, it was the opposite. They remembered it as a happy, even golden time in their lives. Perhaps we humans are prone to remembering our youths positively, but these women all spontaneously seemed to agree on well they ate, how rich the variety and particulars of their diets were, and how they did not feel the lack of outside, specialty, or mass-produced foods, even though such foods were available and considered special treats. Rather than seeing today (where "treats" are the norm and not unusual in any of their lives) as "better" than their childhoods, they seemed to paint a consistent picture of a subsistence childhood that was the better (healthier, happier, simpler) time.

The practice of using hens or eggs to buy supplemental food products appears to have been extremely common. All of my consultants agreed upon this point. Everyone had hens to lay eggs, and though some eggs were eaten and some were hatched, some were always sold or traded for the groceries I mentioned above. Chickens were also eaten and traded. One of my consultants enjoyed chicken more than any other meal on the farm. Some of the women also remembered butchering cows or calves occasionally, and some had lambs and goats too. But pork seems to have been the meat consumed most, at least during the winter months.

Pork, corn, vegetables, fruits, milk, lard, eggs, chickens and sometimes other meat, sweeteners of various sorts (sorghum, maple sugar, honey and cane or beet sugar), wheat flour and occasional delicacies (from outside sources) thus characterize the primary foods of Southern Indiana's self-sustaining farmer. These farmers also supplemented the foods they grew and raised with occasional foods they got from the wilderness, such as mushrooms, berries (as already discussed), and wild fish and game. Most of my consultants did not remember depending much on fish and game. They said that usually the men were too busy working on the farm to go out hunting. But occasionally they would catch some fish, or shoot squirrels or rabbits. No one remembered hunting deer or larger game, and in fact most people did not mention hunting or fishing at all until asked. The food they depended upon was largely the result of their own efforts in cultivating the land and livestock communally; even trade items came mostly as a result of such efforts. It was remembered by the women in their later years to be a happy, although hard, time of their lives.

Usage, Storage and Preparation of Food

Most of my consultants stored the majority of their food by canning it. At the time of my interviews, three of my four consultants still canned green beans and tomatoes every year and two of them still tended their own gardens. These women all grew up during a time when canning methods were changing rapidly. In their lifetimes they changed methods multiple times due to improvements in the cans themselves and in other utensils, such as pressure cookers. They all also remembered their mothers and grandmothers using various methods, such as wax seals on tin cans, wax seals on glass jars, etc. Bertha Fyffe, for instance, remembered several methods when asked about canning:

> Canning, in glass jars, but now mother said the first year that her and dad was married, they had oodles of um, green beans, so just, more than they could use, and so she shelled, shelled out dry beans all winter, she thought, *[chuckles]* because they didn't know how to can them. But then it wasn't but just a few years till they were canning them. But then, when grandma, she used the tin cans a lot times, to can in. Yeah I can remember her having some of them. Uh, not very many, but a few of them, and ah then she had the old wax top jars, she'd seal with, and then they went to the zinc lids, and the, rubber band, and, then the top seals, *[chuckles]* which we have now.
>
> Mary: Did you can things too?
>
> Bertha: *[nodding]* Mm, hmm.
>
> Mary: Every year?
>
> Bertha: I usually can beans and tomatoes, that's my main thing that I can, and I usually have a few pickles, and pickled beets, something that a way, ah, I've canned a few cans of squash or apples, or made apple butter, or something that a way you know. I used to can peas and corn, but I don't anymore. The corn I freeze, and since we've been here, I don't have any luck with raising peas. I can't get out early enough, or the ground stays too wet, and I think it's too hot for them to produce here, but I have canned anywhere from forty-sixty pints of peas. *[pause]* That was a job.
>
> Judi: How long does it take to can that many peas?

> Bertha: Depends, well of course you wouldn't can them all one day, um vary it few days, when they's ready, or maybe you'd have two different kinds, one come on a little earlier than the other you know. But the shelling of them was the biggest job, sitting and shelling them. One year I had so many, we didn't live here at the time, and I had read in a little magazine, where some boy had run them through the washing machine ringer, an old crank handle washing machine ringer. Well I didn't have one of those, I tried to do it on my electric ringer. It worked! But it shot peas all over the room. I took a tub, and I lined it with newspaper standing up to catch the peas *[laughing]* it worked! I had to wash my washing machine ringer. I had so many that I thought I never will get these all shelled *[laughs]*, so that's what I done. And then you, course, at that time, you had to, peas, I forget how long, but it takes peas several minutes to process, especially if you're doing a hot water bath, it takes, oh I've forgotten, at least an hour, hour and a half, at least that long, if you're doing a hot water bath. But pressure, that's what I use most of the time, oh I took, I remember it took corn seventy minutes, in the pressure, so that there's quite a while for the pressure, but it fits so tight, it takes a long time for it to penetrate, to keep it.
>
> Mary: You put the whole jar in there?
>
> Bertha: Mm, hmm, Oh yeah, yeah, just stick several jars around in there. In fact, pressure canner'd hold nine ah pints, depends on your canner, depends on your jars, certain brand of jars you can get ten in! *[laughs]*

As Bertha's colorful description (full of laughter) shows, modernization helped the canning process in several ways even if many people would consider any canning old-fashioned today. While some people are choosing to revive canning as part of the local and sustainable foods movement today, this labor intensive practice is not practiced by most Americans. Although few people continue to do home canning with much more convenient commercial canned goods available, most of the women I interviewed were proud of their canning efforts and continued to can at least some produce at the time we spoke.

From my interviews I learned that there are two basic ways of canning: cold packing or hot packing. Mays Frances explained the difference in methods when I asked her about canning tomatoes:

> Mary: When you're cooking them to can them, do you add anything to them?
>
> Mays: Ah, well you, you peel them, and put them in your pans, and then you put ah, a little salt on the top. A lot of people don't, but I do, because that was the way I was raised. Now when Mother canned them in ah, tin cans, she put uh, sealing wax around the edge of them and that kept the lid airtight.
>
> Mary: Now did she buy the cans?

> Mays: Uh hunh *[yes]*, and bought the sealing wax and it was red, and put it round the edge of it.
>
> Mary: Oh, were they like just big tin cans?
>
> Mays: Well, I think they must have been quart, I really do. *[brief pause to think]*
>
> She didn't cold pack hers. She cooked hers and put 'em in the can and while they was still hot, she sealed them. And set them back. One year she canned one hundred eight cans. And uh, Dad's brother would bring milk in, if we just, was between cows, or the cow was dry and we didn't have milk, why he'd bring milk in and trade it for canned tomatoes, so they could have tomatoes too, and my aunt wouldn't can tomatoes, she said they wouldn't eat them, but he always was bringing in his milk to get canned tomatoes.
>
> Mary: And so when you cold pack them you put them in cold in the jar and then you boil the jar?
>
> Mays: Yes uh hunh, that's the way you cold pack them.
>
> Now when my mother put them in the tin cans, you had to cook them, and then put them in your cans and then seal them while they's still hot.
>
> Mary: I see.
>
> Mays: But ah, you cold pack about, oh not over ten minutes.

It is evident that cold packing could only have come into practice after the introduction of "cans" or jars which could be completely immersed and boiled. As Mays points out, before then her mother had to cook the food before canning it in order to sterilize it.

Fern remembered both cold and hot methods of canning a variety of fruits, vegetables and meats. She also offered advice for which methods to use when (showing she valued this knowledge and wanted to share it):

> After you can them, you heat them and can them, you know.
>
> It's better to freeze strawberries.
>
> We didn't have freezers, so we had to can them.
>
> We done a lot of canning from the garden.
>
> Especially green beans and tomatoes.

Tomatoes, we liked both of those real well.

So we canned them.

We canned some corn, sometime, but we liked the tomatoes and green beans the best

Mary: Now all of this stuff, you cooked it before you canned it?

Fern: Yes, we have to heat them, um, get them real hot, before you can them, because they won't preserve if you don't get them hot.

Mary: Did you add sugar to the berries, or just cook them?

Fern: No, we didn't add sugar to them when we can them, but we did add salt to our green beans, and our tomatoes, when we can them, but when we opened up the berries, then when we had a can, uh, we had to add sugar to them then. But they seemed to keep real well, and they taste fresh, whenever we… *[pausing to think]*

Mary: Did you use ball jars for your canning?

Fern: *[asks me to repeat]* Yeah, we used that.

Mary: Or Mason jars?

Fern: And Mason, glass jars that we used, ah, mostly I think it's Ball and Masons that we used.

Mary: Do you remember before that, using something else?

Fern: *[asks me to repeat]* No, um, I remember my grandmother used a jar that you put a wax on top and sealed it, it was a ah, glass, ah, top, and it fit down inside of another little, which you put wax around and seal it. But we used a glass that you didn't have to put wax on.

Mary: Mm hmm.

Fern: Our lids was…

Mary: After you put the stuff inside and put the lid on, then did you have to boil it again?

Fern: No, uh, we, cold packed, what we call cold packed tomatoes. We set them down into water and put, well we put them down, the jars.

> We put the tomatoes in the jars, cold.
>
> And then we fill it with water, and then we put on the lid,
>
> and then we set them down in the cold packer,
>
> which is a great big round, ah, pan, ah, stirrer,
>
> it's a great big stirrer, which'd have a rack in it, and we could set seven cans in this rack.
>
> They had seven holes for each can,
>
> and we'd set down in there and then we would boil it, boil the water.
>
> And that meant cold pack, ah, tomatoes, and ah,
>
> we'd boil them for about fifteen minutes or less.
>
> It didn't take very long for tomatoes.
>
> But now for green beans when we'd cold pack them, it took longer to can them, I mean cook them, than it did the tomatoes.
>
> And then, when we'd take them out, why you could kind of hear the lids pop, or their lids, and they was sealing when you took them outta this hot water, that we've had to boil them in.
>
> We canned them that a way a lot of times, too.

Later she told me that she no longer canned because it was more expensive to get all this special equipment when store bought canned goods were so cheap and convenient. She also clarified that a "stirrer" was also called a "granite pot." It is what I know as an enamel pot. All the women related that this was a time-consuming activity and they demonstrated that it required special knowledge of techniques and equipment, knowledge they seemed proud to share.

Many items were canned, every vegetable (besides potatoes and others which could be preserved without canning) from cabbage to peas, from corn to tomatoes. Most fruits were also canned. Even meat was preserved by canning. The process for canning meat, however, was different. Meat, typically pork, was packed in its own fat, which would act as a seal. When needed the meat could be dug out of the fat and just cooked up with the fat. Hence small, individual containers (quart or pint sized as for vegetables and fruits) were not needed, and large "lard buckets" could be used. Fern explained:

> Now of course we canned meat too, whenever they butcher a hog, we would ah, can sausage, tenderloin and the ribs, and when we cook them first, get them real hot and put the meat down into the jar. After we fill the jar with the meat, then we take the hot, ah, grease off of the meat that we cooked them in, ah, the water that we cooked it in, we pour onto the meat, to help preserve them, then seal them, while they're still hot. That's the best way, you can preserve them better if they're real hot, like that.

As discussed earlier, butchering day was important. Its role in food preparation is obvious since pork products helped sustain the family with protein throughout at least the winter months. Some significant facts regarding pork preparation nevertheless remain. For instance, all of my consultants stressed that pork was always butchered on a very cold day. For Fern and Mays this meant the "coldest day of winter." Fern explained why:

> We done this on the coldest winter day that come; it come and then Dad said, "well it's time to butcher a hog." It's real cold, and he called the neighbors and asked them to come and help him then. Uh, course they were expecting it, cause most of them. You see they like to hang this, their hog up out, after they slit it open, down the middle, the stomach, they liked to hang it up and let it cool, the meat cool, and if it's a real cold day, the meat'll cool out faster that a way. It needs, uh, so they like to have cold days to do it in.

Mays supported these comments when I asked her what time of year her family butchered: "In the wintertime, uh, when a good strong freeze, so that it would cool real quick. You see if it didn't cool quick, it might, ah, oh get. . .spoiled. . . ."

In addition to making sausage and canning much of the meat, hams and bacon were also prepared. Most people explained their method of smoking similarly. They cured the hams with salt or sugar or maybe both and then smoked them with hickory wood (keeping a fairly constant temperature) for three or four days, and then went out and sliced off from the hams or bacon as needed. Bertha explained the curing method, while also joking that their cured meat sometimes might not have met today's standards, although there was clearly nothing really wrong with it:

> Ah the only thing we had for seasoning was our um home cured meat, and we didn't have bouillon or anything like that. And we just, uh, maybe would brown a little bit to give it the flavor. Like our beef, we'd uh sear it a little bit, kind of brown it a little, and that'd kind of give it the flavor of your bouillon.
>
> And ah, we'd brown it a little bit and um, put some water in to cook that brown off of your whatever you browned it in, you know, until your broth, and um. Then for beans, we'd just use um, like a chunk of ham or something like that, which we had our home cured, sugar cured ham, and we'd generally smoke it, with cedar smoke and ah, we'd season our beans or things like with something like that.

> Our bacon, for bacon we sugar cured our sides and smoked them, which was kind of like your bacon, except it wasn't sliced as thin as a lot a your bacon is if you bought it. Back then we just used our home cured meat that a way. Nowadays people wouldn't even use that because it'd have a little mold on the outside *[sarcastically]* and they wouldn't use it. They'd throw it all away *[we laugh]*, but if it, course you wrapped it in your paper, ah, usually had newspaper out, coated that all with your sugar, and salt, and stuff which you had to, and cover your ham or your side and whatever with that and you wrapped it up real tight, and you wrapped it up in a cloth, and sewed that cloth tight over it, and hung it up, and that way, that pretty well kept the bugs out, and ah, then you'd smoke it, course you had to have it kinda in a tight place, and keep your little pieces of hickory wood from blazing. You'd have to go in and dampen it once in a while, keep it from blazing, so it'd just smolder along, and uh, smoke it for maybe a couple a days like that. And it had a good flavor, we thought. *[laughs]*

In addition to curing methods explained here, Bertha's words help explain seasoning methods. To flavor a dish, one might brown meat or add some cured meat. As with many of these interviews, this one provoked her laughter for what are obviously fond memories.

Besides canning, some vegetables, primarily beans, would be dried and used throughout the year. Fern explained her family's use of dried beans:

> Mary: Did you grow great northern beans?
>
> *[I repeat at her request]*
>
> Fern: Yeah, you could grow them, uh hunh. We had pole beans, which we grow, course we, we bought some beans, for the winter, course we generally, then we had ah, lima beans, which we raised. And of course them are, their bushes are so short, and we try to pick them, it's a big job, back breaking job. *[We both laugh]* But some of them we would pick green, and have green lima beans and then the rest. A lot of times they get dry on us, and then we go pick them, and then we go put them in a sack and beat them, and ah, that would shell them, help shell them, you see.
>
> Mary: Uh hunh.
>
> Fern: Beat them with a stick or something.
>
> Mary: So you grew three kinds of beans.
>
> Fern: Oh yeah, we had green beans and pole beans and lima beans, and well, I don't remember, just what, of course pole beans is dry beans, you can get them dry. Well, lima and green beans can be dried beans too if you let them stay on the vine long

> enough, sometimes some of them get away from us and they get big and we would shell them out and "shell o' beans" we called, green beans.

She also explained that her mother would cook these beans on washdays, since the stove would already be warm for a very long time on those days anyway:

> Well, we, we liked, ah my mother would have to fire up the range on wash days and get her water hot to wash her clothes you see, and we generally put a big pot of beans on to cook, dry beans, that was pintos or great northern beans, you know, you'd have to cook them just about all morning to get them done. She put a big pot of them on to cook, while her water was heating for her clothes.

Fern was not my only consultant who mentioned dried beans. Mays also ate lima and other dried beans. Dried beans were a healthy and easy to grow and store addition to the Southern Indiana diet.

Those vegetables which were not canned, such as potatoes, apples, turnips, carrots, onions, etc were stored in a dry cool place, either a basement or a buried pit. Several of my consultants described this.

> Fern: See we didn't have no deep freeze or anything like that. The cellar was our ah, where we put the potatoes and things in, to preserve them for the winter…
>
> Mary: What's a bank cellar?
>
> Fern: Well, it's a hole dug in the ground just like a basement, you know, and then they build up, with the cement blocks, generally, and then they put dirt on the side, of it, and sometimes they put dirt over the top of it, put the roof on, and, and put dirt on it. But some, what we had, we build a house on top of it, a little house on top of our cellar, just, and it was like a basement, but we didn't have no, uh, stair from the house go down to the basement, we went around on one side and they was an opening. The rest of it was under the ground, which they couldn't see out at all. It was covered completely.
>
> Mary: And you kept your potatoes down there?
>
> Fern: Your potatoes and your canned goods, and, and a lot of things. Potatoes and turnips and sweet potatoes and things that we'd raised that ah. And they wouldn't freeze then, and if we thought they was gonna freeze, my father would fix uh, we had a entrance, a little hallway first, they had a door, then a little hallway, you went through it, and it went into the cellar. It had two doors, you know, one at the front of the hall and one at the end of the hall . . . And, my father would build a fire in this hallway, to keep it warm if it gets down real, real cold, cause he's afraid some of them, some of the fruit or potatoes, would freeze.

> Mary: Would freeze, mm hmm.
>
> Fern: ‘Course, we had apples that we buried, and ah *[laughs]* in under the ground and straw and stuff.
>
> Mary: Ohh!
>
> Fern: And covered them, cause we had a apple orchard and we had a lot of apples, and then we'd go stick our hand in under that cover and dig around there and find us a *[we both laugh]*, or rugs or whatever it was, it was heavy rugs, during the old rugs we put over them, and get us an apple out to eat.
>
> Mary: So you had apples all winter long…
>
> Fern: Yeah, we generally did. We had, we had a big apple orchard there on the farm, which, I mean not a big one, about a dozen trees, course that's a lot of apples on that.

These "bank cellars" were apparently widely used. I remember my own grandmother describing a similar method that was used when she was growing up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in the 1910s and 20s. At that time, they kept their root vegetables and apples in their cellar as well (in bins) and occasionally had to clear the rotten pieces out of the bins. Mary Naylor and Mays Frances remembered very similar ways of storing apples and root vegetables. The basic pattern seems to have been to keep them in a very cool, dark place, but not to let it get too freezing cold. If it did get too cold, you needed to build a fire to keep them warm. If the goods were buried in the ground, the ground itself would presumably provide ample insulation.

Yet another ingenious method for keeping food at a desirable and fresh temperature concerns milk. In her usual adept narrative fashion, Fern described her family's method without even being asked:

> And then, we had cows and we always had milk, and, and in order to have cold milk for our meals, we had a dug well that was about three foot deep, and there was a big tub which we could put our um, bucket with a lid on it and a bail that was good, strong, and put our milk in this bucket and drop it down into the well. And it was set in this water, this cold water all day, then we could haul them up, or whenever we wanted we could draw it up from the well and it'd be cold, for our meals that we wanted to use the milk for.
>
> Mary: Wow.
>
> Fern: And it was just like a refrigerator, it would be cold and nice, its, we really enjoyed our milk, being cold. *[smiles]*

When I asked my other consultants whether they used this method, only Bertha remembered something similar. Mary said they just put their milk in pans of water to cool it before they got electricity. Both she and Mays remarked that they could not use a well because it was covered by cement. Mays's family, in the town, had an old-fashioned ice box with a fifty pound block of ice delivered each week to keep their food cold. Bertha's family also used an icebox but she remembered having heard of keeping milk cold by water:

> Grandma only had a, a big box out there on the back porch. And they'd buy a hundred pound of ice, once a week. And they'd drop it in that box and wrap it up and that would keep their milk from morning 'til night in hot weather, you know, so they'd have cool milk. Or if the ice ran out, why she just took her stuff to the cellar, and it wasn't real cold, but it kept it from spoiling…
>
> Mary: Did you have a well?
>
> Bertha: Ahh, we used a cistern mostly here. Now there's a well, originally they had a well, and it's under the two back rooms there, where it's at now, but we don't use it.
>
> Mary: My neighbor was telling me yesterday that … they used to put things down in a pail, and put it down in the well and that would keep it real cold.
>
> Bertha: Uhh, mother said that, ah, before they built these two rooms on back, that uh, there was a little bitty, what they called a well house, that wasn't over the well, but just a little bitty shed-like thinger out here in the back, and it had a trunk. And they'd pump water, cool water through, and set their milk and butter and stuff like that in there, and every once in a while they'd drain it out and pump more cool water into it. She said she remembered Grandma, be my great-Grandmother, done that, her Grandmother done that, but, course it was gone before I came along *[laughs]*.

It is possible that Bertha's family used the cistern instead of a well to cool their milk because there was more limestone where she lived and hence it was harder to dig a well but I did not investigate this and cannot say for sure. What is interesting is that everyone remembered somehow using water to cool their milk and that they all remembered some method to keep milk drinkable for some time.

These were the primary methods of food preparation and storage. Most of these methods seem to have been very effective means for preserving a variety of foods to last throughout the winter (or at least to prolong the life of the food). These methods, such as using the well to cool milk, burying root vegetables and apples to keep them fresh, and using the meat's own fat to seal it, are effective and energy efficient to the point of being ingenious. They no doubt reflect long-standing wisdom passed down through generations (probably since Europe in many cases) and somewhat adapted to the environment of Southern Indiana. Our ancestors showed high capacity in growing, using, and preserving food in order to provide a varied and healthy diet in every season.

Actual cooking methods seemed equally varied. People baked daily, either breads, biscuits, or desserts, and sometimes meats. People boiled vegetables or in the summer ate them fresh. And of course people fried lots of food, primarily meat, but also potatoes and other vegetables. I wondered how often the stove would be on, especially after Fern pointed out how special the food was on wash day, since the stove had to be on all day to heat the water then. But when I asked Fern about this, I found that the stove seems to have been used all year round:

> Mary: Right, and um, then on days when you didn't turn the stove on in the summer, did you just eat raw vegetables?
>
> Fern: Well, we generally had a fire, you know it was a wood stove and we generally had a fire in it every day.
>
> Mary: Oh.
>
> Fern: To cook some of our meals. But we didn't always have it on all morning, like we did on wash days, we had to keep it going, the fire going, sometimes that was my job to keep the fire going, I had to keep wood in the stove, it was a range, with six lids on top of it, and a fire box was on one end, and the tank of water was on the other end, a reservoir we called it, of water, and that water would get hot there, ‘course it was clear on the other end from that fire box, but it would still get hot enough that we could wash dishes, we always had a tea kettle of water on the stove somewhere, to keep water hot for us to use hot water.

The stove was thus used all year round to prepare meals and to wash. As we move into methods of cooking food, we move into the third section of this study, meals.

The Meal System

The meal system was straightforward and logical. Breakfast was the heaviest meal generally. This is when meat was most often consumed, along with biscuits and gravy, and eggs. Fern's description typifies such breakfasts:

> And then for breakfast, we had some kind of meat, generally a piece of ham or sausage, and had, mother made big pans of biscuits, milk biscuits, there were really was big…
>
> Mary: Mm hmm.
>
> Fern: About this big around *[gestures]*.

> She made big ones, about that tall.
>
> Mary: Wow, made out of flour, wheat flour?
>
> Fern: Yeah, white flour,
>
> and she made these um, biscuits,
>
> and then she'd make them, after she'd get her meat fried, she make a great big skillet full of gravy, with the ba-, uh, meat drippings you know, after you'd cooked out the meat and there was the grease, you'd make gravy with it. And then some mornings she would have a big pot of rice cooked, course that takes a long time to cook rice too, it has to swell like beans does *[laughs]*.
>
> Mary: Yeah.
>
> Fern: And then she would put cream in it, when she gets it about done, cooked cream and some of them, like sugar on it, and some of them just like the rice with the, with just the cream on it. They all liked it with cream on it.
>
> Mary: Uh huh, did you buy the rice?
>
> Fern: Yes, we had to buy the rice, we didn't raise it, we don't have, of course we can't raise it here. It's not warm enough, I don't think, to raise rice here.

The creamed rice that Fern described is further evidence of the variety of the Southern Indiana diet. Some of my consultants explained that a big meal in the morning was necessary to sustain everyone for a long day's manual labor on the farm. Fern made the food sound delicious and she seemed to have enjoyed these big breakfast (as her laughter supports). Mays Frances's family, who were not farmers, but lived in a town with a large garden and some livestock, described their typical breakfast: "Well, for breakfast it would be ah, bacon and eggs and gravy and biscuits, and mother always made jams and jellies, and of course that was home canned."

Mary Naylor's family's breakfasts were exceptional among my group because they rarely ate meat for breakfast. She explained that this was due to her Scottish father's influence. He insisted upon oatmeal for breakfast everyday:

> Mary M: How 'bout, what about your mother? What did she usually make for breakfast?
>
> Mary N: OATMEAL! My Dad was from Scotland, and he didn't think there was a breakfast if you didn't have oatmeal.
>
> Mary M: Oh, where did you get the oats?

> Mary N: Bought them, bought rolled oats.
>
> Mary M: So did you have a big bag of them?
>
> Mary N: I don't remember. But we always oatmeal, always had oatmeal, 365 days a year, oatmeal.
>
> Mary M: How much meat did you eat every day?
>
> Mary N: Oh, I don't know.
>
> Mary M: Did you eat it for all three meals?
>
> Mary N: Usually we didn't have it for breakfast.
>
> Mary M: Uh hunh, no sausage or bacon or anything? *[She indicates no]*.
>
> But lunch or dinner and supper?
>
> Mary N: Usually. Papa always had eggs for breakfast.
>
> Mary M: Eggs and oatmeal?
>
> Mary N: Well, that was, I called my husband ‘Papa’ *[we laugh]*. No, my Dad always oatmeal, and I don't know what else he ate, I don't remember, probably eggs, I don't know, just, I remember the oatmeal, because I didn't like it.

As in other parts of the country "noon meal" was also commonly known as "dinner" and what we now call dinner was referred to as "evening meal," or "supper." My Grandmother in Michigan who grew up in the same time period also used these same appellations.

Generally the noon meal, or dinner, for these women consisted of fresh vegetables in the summertime, bread (probably cornbread traditionally), probably something substantial like chili, soup, or beans, and perhaps chicken or other meat. Again, hard work throughout the day would require a fairly substantial amount of food for "dinner." Mays remembered her mother preparing a typical noon meal: "And then for dinner, she'd cook beans, maybe cook a piece of meat, put potatoes in it." Fern remembered her noon meals, especially in the summertime, as being full of fresh vegetables from their garden:

> For ah, our noon meal, and I'd generally try to get lettuce in and radishes, and onions out of the garden.
>
> I forgot about onions, we had onions too in the garden.
>
> And then bring them in, wash them clean them up, and

if we had carrots, we had that, that would be a noon meal….

We always enjoyed going out and getting lettuce and radishes and carrots. All them was raw, which we eat raw you know out of the garden. And I'd gather a big dishpan full of lettuce about everyday out of the garden, long as we had it. And my father liked it wilted, I did too, we fixed it wilted, we fixed, ah, we liked wilted lettuce to go with our other things that we had.

Mary: So that means you just cook it up a little bit?

Fern: Well, we ah, fixed a hot, uh, bacon grease and um, well v-i-n-e-g-a-r.

Mary: Uh hunh, vinegar

Fern: Yeah, I can't say it *[whispering with a smile]*.

[We laugh]

And uh, make it, put those two things together, and a little sugar in it, and get it real hot

And we'd have our lettuce ready, which sometimes we had to cut our leaves because they were so big, and then we poured this over, over the lettuce, and that would wilt it.

Mary: Ohh!

Fern: Make a real good dish for us to have a green, something green to eat, and we'd have that every day in the summertime.

Mary: Wow, what else did you eat in the summertime?

Fern: Well for wash day it was generally with these beans, and sometimes we'd put potatoes in and cook potatoes, after the beans had cooked a good long while then we'd put a few potatoes in with them, and then we'd make a great big pan of corn bread.

Fern remembered plenty of vegetables for meals, and this was echoed by Mary Naylor:

Mary M: Yeah, how about lunch?

Mary N: Just depended on what you had.

Mary M: Vegetables from the garden.

> Mary N: Always had vegetables from the garden, and ah, my oldest sons were always picky, a lot of things he wouldn't like, but he'd always eat beans and potatoes, so we had beans and potatoes every day.
>
> Mary M: Mmm. Green beans this is?
>
> Mary N: Well dry beans too — lima beans, dry lima beans, white beans, brown beans, or dry limas, green limas, whatever you had, and then I would add whatever I made along with ah…
>
> Mary M: Did you make a lot of corn bread?
>
> Mary N: Oh yes we had corn, and ah, raise corn in the garden.
>
> Mary M: Did you sell it or make it into meal?
>
> Mary N: No, uh hunh.
>
> Mary M: Oh you never made it into meal? You just ate the corn itself?
>
> Mary N: Mm, hmm, just corn, and ah, now I freeze it, I like it better.

She also explained at another point: "There's certain things we like better frozen than canned. I wouldn't give a nickel for a frozen package of green beans, but I wouldn't give you a nickel for canned corn." This affirms her strong sensibility for the best ways to prepare and consume particular foods: frozen corn and canned beans are superior (though freezers are of course a post-industrial addition to the kitchen). Summer meals for all the women were particularly vegetable rich, as one would expect. The women also confirmed that the pork they had put up during the winter often lasted, as Mary Naylor put it, "into the summer." But I suspect that the meat was consumed more heavily during the winter and no one was concerned when it ran out during the summer because they were enjoying plenty of fresh vegetables. In the fall they had their root vegetables, apples and other animals (such as chickens). Interestingly, though, when I asked what they ate for their meals, everyone's descriptions rested largely on the summer pattern of many fresh vegetables. These were the bountiful times of richest variety and tastiest meals so it is not surprising that their memories turn first to these best of food times.

There is substantial variety in the meals Fern described as typical during the summer. Though there would not have been as much fresh food available in winter, Fern remembered that it nonetheless was still pretty tasty and healthy even in winter, due to their preservation efforts (so those vegetables and fruits in the winter would be canned):

> Mary: How about in the winter? Did you have different meals in the winter than you did in the summer?

> Fern: Well, just only it was canned goods, instead of getting it out of the garden. You know, we had those, there wasn't too much change in our diet.
>
> Mary: Lots of vegetables?
>
> Fern: Of course we had canned vegetables which we opened, and then berries which we had picked and of course, ah, my mother canned apples too, and she canned cherries if we'd have cherries, or peaches.
>
> Mary: Uh hunh, mmmm.
>
> Fern: You know, she canned those, and then she canned rhubarb; we had a lot of rhubarb, which we canned a lot of it. And then she canned gooseberries, we had gooseberries which we canned.
>
> Out on the farm you have a variety of things that you can can, and then use it in the winter. And it just always seemed like a treat when my mother opened up a can of berries for us to have for a meal. She didn't open berries every day.
>
> Mary: Ohh.
>
> Fern: Maybe once a week or every other week. A big jar of berries, and we just always, it was a treat to us, to have them in the winter time like that.

Obviously there was substantial variety even during the winter because of their hard work at growing and canning during the summer and fall.

The evening meal was typically the lightest of the three. All of my consultants agreed that "supper" consisted of whatever leftovers there were from other meals. If more food was needed, they might fry up some potatoes, make more biscuits, fry eggs, or some other such supplement. Fern remembered that supper was when whatever milk products they had might be consumed. That was when cottage cheese was eaten (perhaps since it took all day to make it) and that is also when milk might be added to leftover cornbread. Fern described their evening meals:

> And then the evening meal, we generally had beans left from the noon meal, and then we had corn bread, and we had our, ah milk. We'd eat, uh, big hunks of corn bread in our milk, and eat that corn bread and milk together.
>
> Mary: Mmmm.
>
> Fern: We liked that real good.
>
> Mary: Yeah it sounds good! *[Fern and I laugh]*.

> Fern: It uh, and that was our evening meal then.
>
> For wash days, of course other days, we had, we didn't always have to have the range a'goin so long, course we had big pans of fried potatoes, and uh that we liked too, that we fixed, the family all liked that.
>
> Mays remembered evening meals similarly: "And then we would have for supper what was left from noon, and then maybe if we had enough for the next day, why then for supper maybe she would fry potatoes and make biscuits. And then when light break would come, Joe always said he'd like fried biscuits and fried bread and butter and eat by lamplight."
>
> Mary N. described a similar pattern:
>
> Mary M: And then how 'bout dinner?
>
> Mary N: Well *[laughs]* hopefully there's something left, and we had our dinner at noon, because dinner is your big meal, and that was ah, and we had supper, because lots of times it wasn't `til 9:00 at night, and I took what was left over from dinner and added to it for supper, just depending on how much you had left.

The meal pattern in Southern Indiana follows a typical pattern for farmers. As mentioned earlier, families did have some methods, such as well water to cool milk. However, refrigeration was not as widespread and it would have been hard to keep food fresh for more than a day. Most food was eaten up in one day if possible. That meant "leftovers" would be leftover from breakfast or "dinner" and consumed completely for supper (with scraps possibly given to animals).

It is interesting to know what everyone's favorite meal was. Mary Naylor said there was nothing special she could pick out as her favorite. She liked everything they had, more or less, and said there was too many of them to pick out a favorite. Bertha, Fern, and Mays were able to remember favorites. But their favorites were not particularly unusual meals, just one of the things they ate regularly that they particularly enjoyed. This is further confirmation that they really valued the lifestyle for its humble, daily routine. For instance Bertha enjoyed homemade yeast rolls which her mother made well and beef and noodles which she still made herself:

> Mary: What were some of your favorite meals?
>
> Bertha: Oh, you mean what I prepared?
>
> Mary: Mm hmm, or that your mother prepared.
>
> Bertha: Well I don't know, of course the old homemade yeast rolls was one of my favorites *[laughs]*, when we had them *[laughs]*. But we would have, um, I always liked

> the beef and noodles, you know, mashed potatoes with them, green beans, something like that. Of course, we'd usually open ah, have beet pickles or cucumbers opened up *[from their canned stores]* to eat with them.
>
> Mary: Were they homemade noodles?
>
> Bertha: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Still today I make my own noodles *[laughing]*, if I have noodles.

She also gave us her recipe for noodles. Good, simple food came to her mind readily when I asked her what she most enjoyed, and she wanted to share this good food with us.

In describing her favorite meal, Mays made it clear that it was something they ate regularly:

> Mary: What was your favorite meal?
>
> Mays: Fried chicken, goes with raising our chickens, we had. We ate a lot of chicken, and ah, mother used to make chicken and dumplings and dressing. I believe, of my mother's meals, I think that is the best one that she always made, was chicken and, cause she made dumplings out of the broth of the chicken. She'd boil the chicken, and then she'd take a cup of hot broth and pour in her flour and mix it up with a fork, and roll it out and cut them.

Mays also gave me a recipe, and as you see, made sure we understand the method for cooking her favorite foods.

Finally, Fern's favorite meal also reflected her family's typical meals:

> Mary: What would you say is one of your favorite meals that your Mom made?
>
> Fern: Well, I liked the great northern beans, fried potatoes and onions and lettuce. That was my favorite meal, generally, in the summertime, cause we had lettuce then, and onions you see, sometimes we have a few of the onions left too, that we dry, but not too many, cause we eat *[laughs]* so many through the summer months. We didn't have many, but we could buy onions of course, through the winter. But that was my meal, with ah, and then popcorn to finish it off in the evening *[we both laugh]*.

With popcorn, Fern raised another aspect of the meal system: treats such as snacks and desserts. Desserts were fairly common, especially pies and cakes, and fresh, cooked, or preserved fruit. Cakes, pies, and preserved fruits typically made an appearance once a week or so and were considered a special treat. But interestingly (since it is now considered a modern phenomenon), everyone also remembered snacking occasionally and this usually meant popcorn or apples in the evening. I have already discussed methods of keeping apples fresh all winter. If anyone was hungry in the evening they were free to go stick their arm through the covers or rugs to get an apple from the pile. Apples were also often cooked up into a variety of tasty desserts.

Besides apples, popcorn was described as a common snack. Only Fern talked of growing their own patch of popcorn, but several of my consultants remembered snacking on popcorn fairly frequently. They also sometimes made popcorn balls, which they would sweeten with sorghum. Fern remembered her family’s evening snacking activities:

> We ah, we enjoyed our apples, of course, cause mother would make apple dumplings, and ah, pies and cobblers, and then just stewed apples, just cook them, and we'd just eat them stewed. They, we liked our apples, and then raw apples, if we wanted raw apples, and of course my father would put out a big patch of popcorn.
>
> Mary: Oh!
>
> Fern: And we had popcorn all winter long, anytime we wanted it, every night if we wanted it. My brother he liked a big dish full, pan full of popcorn to eat, for, after we eat our evening meal. Oh my brother liked his popcorn real well, but we all liked popcorn.
>
> Mary: How'd you cook it?
>
> Fern: We popped it, ah, oh my father had a little wire basket, about this big *[gestures]*, with a handle on it, he opened the door of the heating, our heating stove.
>
> Mary: Uh hunh.
>
> Fern: It was a wood *[stove]*, which we'd heat the house with. He'd open the door there and he'd pull this, this little popper into the stove and pop the corn over the…
>
> Mary: Ohh.
>
> Fern: Over the coals.
>
> Mary: Open fire, oh.
>
> Fern: Mostly, he liked coals, hot coals, for to pop popcorn.
>
> And then we could see through that wire *[laughs]*.
>
> Mary: Wow.
>
> Fern: See how much it was a poppin’ *[laughs]*.

> Do that, one place we lived, after I got gone, we had a fireplace, and he popped it over the fireplace that way, had a handle on his little basket.
>
> Mary: So it must have been a pretty fine mesh?
>
> Fern: Yeah it was fine, uh hunh, it was a wire, something like screen wire or something that was close enough where the grains didn't fall out. He'd pop it in that. Sometime, I remember one time, though, he had a popper that was uh, made of metal, some kind of metal, with a top on it, that had the open top. I mean it as a, screen top, you could see down in it. He had that, popped the corn in it.
>
> Mary: Uh hunh.
>
> Fern: We all loved popcorn, so, and then we were talking about our entertainments of the evening, what we'd do.
>
> Mary: Uh hunh.
>
> Fern: *[Describes mother playing organ, and playing games like checkers and dominoes while eating popcorn]* We may not have had very much candy, but we had popcorn, all the popcorn we wanted to eat.
>
> Mary: Did you put anything on the popcorn?
>
> Fern: Well, we liked butter on it and ah, salt, a little salt and butter on it. And then we made popcorn balls too.
>
> Mary: Ohh.
>
> Fern: With our sorghum, we'd cook our sorghum down, and pour it on our popcorn balls that we'd have, on our corn. And then we'd mash the corn together and make balls out of them. Cause they'd stick together, and if we tried to get them before the sor-, sorghum would, ah get too cold. Always tried to do it while it's still hot. We had corn, popcorn balls that a way.

Although no one else remembered such an ingenious method of popping their popcorn, others did remember that they regularly popped and ate popcorn. Most described that they usually used butter or lard and salt to season it.

Besides meals, desserts and snacks, it is interesting to consider what Southern Indianans typically drank. I was surprised to find that no one I talked to remembered drinking much coffee or tea. They occasionally boiled coffee for breakfast, but not daily, and no one remembered their parents drinking coffee all through the day. My consultants and their families never seemed to drink hot tea. When I asked, they only remembered iced tea and only ever on special occasions, such as the Fourth of July or other picnic holidays, because ice was so rare. Lemonade might also make an appearance on such days. So far as I could tell, that meant that what most people generally drank was water and milk.

Conclusion: Southern Indiana Foodways

Although none of the women I interviewed was rich, the richness of their lifestyle emerged clearly. Each made a point of stressing how much they enjoyed everything connected to their food (including holidays, community gatherings and more beyond the family life primarily focused on herein). They also affirmed that they never went hungry; by contrast they painted pictures of the bounty of their lives growing up. All these women remembered having very little money, mainly just what they earned from milk, eggs, and extra produce or livestock. They emphasized that when they grew up during the depression no one had much money and that they did not feel poor. It was clear from their demeanor throughout the interviews, as well as from their words, that they all enjoyed sharing their memories with me. Without any of them having heard the others' interviews, they agreed on many points of how good their lives were. Fern Jewell summarized the key idea they seemed to share:

> Mary: So were you able to live pretty well through the year just with the food you raised, and gathered?
>
> Fern: Yes, we had enough food on hand, generally to live through the winter months.
>
> They just planted that a way, 'cause we didn't have the money to buy during the depression, unless we had a few eggs to trade in for something, and that generally was for essentials that we couldn't raise on the farm, you know.
>
> Mary: Yes. Did you always have enough to eat every day?
>
> Fern: We had all the food we wanted to eat every day. I never was hungry in my life. There was always enough food on the table. We didn't go away from the table hungry, none of us did. We had enough food to eat; there was always enough food there.
>
> Mary: Well it sounds like a wonderful life.
>
> Fern: *[laughing]* Well I enjoyed it a lot.

Fern ended on one of the common threads throughout these interviews and the memories they are based on: laughter. Sharing their food memories led each of these women to laugh during many parts of our interviews.

Michael Owen Jones explains that everything connected to food and how we discuss it can be symbolic and that we often define ourselves through such food-related messages. He writes, "In social interaction involving food, individuals often make decisions about who they want to appear to be, who they do not want to appear to be, and what the best way to behave is in order to be perceived as they wish" (2007:135). He demonstrates how deeply food influences our culture, our individual lives, and how much we reveal about ourselves and our cultures through our food choices, lifestyles, food-related connections, language, memories, and so on. If we consider the laughter associated with all these women's food memories and stories as representative of these women's lives, we can take them at their word that they ate well, lived well, and that they "enjoyed it a lot."

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