

Flatt, Janella JONES - Memories of Raising, Gathering and Preserving Our Food at Home When I Was a Child

written April 2002

and typed by Dean Bones June 2022

In the spring my dad would take the horse and plough and plow up a little over an acre of ground to plant a garden. Then he would harrow it over and over to smash up all the clods. and make the ground soft. Fertilizer was spread all over the ground, and the ground was harrowed again.

My dad took a cultivator with a sharp tool attached and made straight rows to plant the different kinds of vegetable seeds. My mom followed him and planted the seeds.. The the row was covered up lightly with dirt. At the end was a stick in the ground and the empty vegetable seed packet was put over the stick to remember what was planted in the row.

In the meantime while the vegetables were growing and getting to be harvested Dad dug a big place in a bank of dirt and built a root house. It had shelves on three sides. Then straw was put all over the shelves. When the potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions and beets were ready to be dug they were taken and laid on the straw and then covered with straw again. A kerosene lantern was hung from the ceiling. This was to help them from freezing in the winter.

When the corn was ready to be picked and shucked it was cut off the cob and put in quart jars with some salt and water added. The jars were put in some water in the boiler that was on the wood cookstove and cooked 'till they were done and taken out of the water. The lids were screwed on real tight and left on the draining board to cool. Then they were taken to the vegetable and fruit cupboard on the enclosed back woodshed.

The green beans were picked, strung and snapped. Then they were put in jars with some salt water and a few pieces of bacon for seasoning. They were processed the same as corn.

Beans would dry in the shell and then be picked, shelled and put in gallon glass jars for later use as dry beans.

There were lots of cucumbers. We made all kinds of pickles - dill, sweet and bread and butter pickles.

Mom also made all kinds of jams and jellies such as wild blackberry and raspberry. Each was put in big jelly glasses. When they got cool and set Mom poured paraffin over the jams and jelly to seal them.

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She also made all of the bread we ate as well as cinnamon rolls, doughnuts, etc. I can never forget how good her taffy and divinity fudge candy was. My sister or I could never make it to taste like hers.

In the fall a beef and hog were butchered for our winter's use. All the meat was cut off the beef into chunks the size of stew meat, put in jars with salt and water added and then put on the stove in the boiler and cooked 'till done. When a jar of meat was opened some gravy was made and put over the meat and poured over mashed potatoes. Mom boiled all the meat off the bones. The broth was canned and used later to cook dumplings or noodles in or sometimes used to make vegetable stew.

The pork was cut off of the bones, put through a sausage grinder and made into patties. Then the patties were fried and put into a big crock with grease poured over the patties to preserve the meat.

We had livestock. When the milk was poured into the milk cans the cream would come to the top. Some of the cream was skimmed off and put into a glass gallon jar. Then some was put into the churn and churned by holding the handle and turning the wheel 'till it finally churned into butter. I still have the mold we used. We also made cottage cheese, but I can't remember the whole process we used in making the cottage cheese.

My dad built a smokehouse. He hammered 1 X 2" strips of lumber across the inside of the smokehouse and drove small nails in the 1 X 2s. When he finally got the smokehouse finished it was time to go to the creek, Tony creek, in front of the house and catch a salmon. He would bring the salmon up to the house and clean it. If it was a female and had eggs my dad would put the eggs in brine to preserve them for later use when we would want to go fishing.

Dad cut the salmon in long strips, rubbed it with salt and put an S-shaped wire through the tip of each salmon string. He made the S-shaped wire from the baling wire that came around the baled hay that was fed to the livestock. Then the salmon was taken up to the smoke house and each string was hung on one of the nails to dry.

Vine maple was cut into small pieces and laid on the ground inside the smoke house in order to dry the salmon. The vine maple was burning slowly all the time till the salmon was completely smoked which took around 10 to 14 days.

Nothing was any better than real vine maple-smoked salmon and my mom's salmon gravy poured over her home-made baking powder biscuits.

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My dad would take worn out files and put them in a real hot fire. He would hammer on one end 'till it was real thin. Then he would sharpen it. They were called spudders.

In the summer time we each got a spudder and a pack board. We went up into the woods to peel the bark off of the chitem trees. The bark was also known as cascara bark. The spudder was used to slit the bark. We put as much bark on the pack board as we could carry out of the woods.

We laid all the bark on the grass to dry. When it got dry it was put through a bark breaker to cut into small pieces, put into a burlap sack and then sewed the top of the sack closed.

After we got a few sacks full it was taken to Beaver Grocery Store and sold. Then a truck would go to all of the stores that bought the chitem bark and take the bark out to Portland. Various businesses would buy it to use in making different products. Also some was shipped to other parts of the country.

After my sister left home and got married about every summer she would come home for a visit.

She and I would go to the store, get a big piece of liver as in those days the liver was free of charge. We would go down to the Big Nestucca river and take a long string. The string was tied to a rock or heavy sinker. Then pieces of liver were tied on the string and thrown into the river. It wasn't long 'till the crawfish smelled it and came to eat. We caught so many we couldn't pack them home. So my sister had to go get the car and come back down to the river to get the crawfish.

My mom and sister would clean them and put them in huge kettles on the wood stove to cook. They were seasoned with pickling spices.

There were a couple of logging camps close by, and some of the loggers would stop by. And we would all sit down at our round oak table for a crawfish feed.

My sister and I would clean the crawfish and save the meat 'till we had enough to make a sandwich. They were real good. We never got tired of having crawfish to eat.

When we wanted clams to eat we would look in the tide book to see when there was going to be a low tide.

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We would get up early, pack a lunch and drive down to Carver's landing below Cloverdale on the Little Nestucca river. I don't think it is there anymore. Mrs. Effie Carver would rent boats for \$.25 each. Then we would row down the river to the clam flats.

You would have to dig the clams pretty fast because it wasn't too long 'till the tide would come, and the clam flats would be covered with water. If a clam shell was damaged it was never kept. It was just thrown on the flats for the seagulls to have. There were always plenty of seagulls around looking for food.

Then all of the clams were put in the boats, and we rowed back up the river to Carver's landing.

When we got home the first thing was to clean all of the clams. Then we fried some to eat. Then Mom would can the rest for later use.

In those days there weren't any limits to the amount of clams you dug, and you didn't have to purchase a license.

The clam shells were put out to dry. When they got dry they were smashed up real fine and given to the chickens to scratch around in and eat.