

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

BBQ and Chicken Pie

Known for their farming excellence that has endured for generations, the Suttons of Bucklesberry also developed a reputation through the years for good cooking. Barbeque (BBQ) pork was one of their specialties. Up until the 1960s, it was not unusual for a farmer in the neighborhood to announce that his family would be hosting a BBQ, particularly in the fall of the year after the crops had been harvested. All the locals were invited to bring a covered dish or two, along with their favorite sweet treats. Dinner was served on the grounds under the shade of century-old pecan trees.

But hosting BBQs is not a recent tradition in Bucklesberry. For example, Kirby E. Sutton (1866–1930) would hold an annual dinner at his farm that featured BBQ on the menu. In 1916, with about 200 guests that included his tenants, friends, and guests from across and out-of-State, Kirby’s annual event was reported by the Kinston Daily Free Press: “A number of young pigs were barbequed for the feast. The culinary genius in charge of the barbequing almost established a record. The enticing spread on the tables and the delectable odor created marvelous appetites...more than enough to feed the multitude.”

In addition to BBQ, Bucklesberrians were also known for their chicken pie. One reporter for the Goldsboro Messenger in 1886 stated, simply, that he “could eat about two square acres of a Sutton chicken pie.” An apparently extraordinarily tasty cuisine back then, *Our State* magazine cautioned that it was different than what we know today as chicken pot pie. Chicken pie, as they describe it, had no vegetables; rather, “beneath its flaky crust, you’ll find just chicken and thickened broth, nothing else.”

For Council S. Wooten (1840–1930), 19th century attorney for many of the Bucklesberry Suttons, his personal experience in dining on chicken pie at the home of Hardy (1803–1861) and Annie Hill Sutton (1807–1881) is noteworthy. We close with an excerpt from an article about Bucklesberry that Mr. Wooten wrote in 1886 for the Goldsboro Messenger:

“My father although not a lawyer, did most of the legal business for the people of [Bucklesberry]. His only fee was a big dish of chicken pie. He used to say that nobody but a Sutton could make a chicken pie fit to eat. If anybody will ever try one of their pies he will come to the same conclusion. I imagine that some of the legal fraternity who read this will think that he was a cheap worker, but I will wager my Sunday hat that if some of them could go down in Bucklesberry and eat a chicken pie made by one of the Suttons, (for the art has been transmitted to this generation) he would think that he had received a good and liberal fee.”

“I recollect when I was a boy I went with my father to Hardy Sutton’s to attend to some business for the old gentleman. When dinner was announced I went to the table and such a profusion of good eating I never saw before spread on one table. At the foot of the table was a dish at least three or four feet long filled with chicken pie. Mrs. [Annie] Sutton took a stand behind my chair kept piling up the pie on my plate, and telling me that I was eating nothing and that I must be sick. I was young and small and was afraid not to eat, for from the way the old lady piled it on my plate I thought she would be mad if I did not eat it.”

“Now I tell you that you can’t insult me or make me sick by putting something on my plate, for nature has blessed me with good digestive organs. Insisting on people’s eating is characteristic of the Sutton family. A stranger who is not acquainted with this habit of theirs is liable to get into trouble, for there is danger of eating too much, especially a man who is not accustomed to such sumptuous fare as they spread before him.”