

PRETELS

If you could travel back in time before the founders laid the first brick on the foundation of St. John, you would have found an infant community of German farmers, some only recently off the ships that brought them to America. These sturdy people eventually laid that first brick on the foundation, and in the years following the establishment of the church, made up the backbone of its congregational membership. You can still find evidence of their influence in the church's social arena with this staple of potluck tables.

This old German recipe found its way to our hearts and stomachs through my mother. She passed it along in oral form and it rests in written form in a volume titled *The Keepsake Recipe Collection* that sits on our pantry shelf. Every once in a while, my wife will mix up a batch and we will have a supply in the freezer for a few weeks. I fear that one day it will be illegal to consume it because of some politically correct dietary law. Until then, it remains the responsibility of our generation to preserve its legacy.

Someone with a little more time on their hands could probably trace its history back before the early 1900s, but that is the time frame of this recollection. The women of the time usually prepared the food for large social gatherings, barn raisings, and communal harvests. They would use huge meat grinders to grind the meat and huge bowls to mix. There was often so much to have to mix in the bowls it required the stronger men to do that part. The product proved to be a sturdy entrée for a sturdy people and gave them the sustenance needed for strong physical work.

While the recipe given below is obviously for a smaller quantity, its qualities of nourishment and memory remain just as large as what came out of those huge mixing bowls.

3 pounds of beef roast

3 pounds of pork

18 ounces of quick oats

Lots of smoked salt and pepper

Lots of ground allspice

Cook beef roast and pork in water for about four hours at a lower temperature until the meat is tender and falling off the bone. Remove the meat and strain the broth.

Add salt, pepper, and allspice to the broth and cook it until boiling. Then add oats to the broth, stir well, and turn off the burner and cover the broth mix.

Grind beef and pork with a fine grinding blade. Mix meat with the oats and broth mix. You can add water if needed until the mix is good and moist.

Let the mix set overnight in the refrigerator. Then divide up and freeze until ready to use.

When cooking for use, you can add eggs and cheese if you want, and it's also good cooked in butter.

WARNING: After consuming a large portion of pretels, you may feel the urge to go out and do some serious work or ... take a nap.