Come on Kids, Lets Eat!

From about the time I was seven years old I've been cooking. During my early years most of your food were garden raised. Pinto beans, onions, cabbage, carrots, potatoes (Irish and sweet), corn (yellow dent and white), tomatoes, radishes, mustard and turnip greens, asparagus, dill, cucumber, and okra. Water mellon and cantalope was planted along with the cotton. A desenated spot in the field were picked out and the seed was drop in the planter box with the cotton seed. Every thing you raise in the garden were harvest and canned for winter months whin there were no going to town but maybe once a month.

Canning season was very hard work. There were always plenty of plums and wild blackberries, peaches for jelly whin corn were ripe. You pull, shuck, silk, cut off the corn, and can. Whin it was harvest you shuck and shell, pick out the good grain, and made hominy. Shell corn were taken to the mill and grind up for corn meal.

Pinto beans were pick early for green beans, and some time there were fresh Irish potatoes mix with the green beans with a piece of dry salt for season. All the vegetables were canned in fruit jars. Finely my mother were able to get a canner and a pressure cooker and a can sealer. Cabbage were use to make chow chow. Most farming famleys main meals consist of red beans, dry salt or ham bone, potatoes, corn bread, biscus and gravy—breakfast, lunch, and supper. Day in and day out, year round.

There were all way plenty of chickin and eggs. Winter time it was rabbit, squirrel, possum. Birds were fry with dumpling or smother in gravy same as rabbit. Dad could take a jack rabbit and make chili. The hog head was cook whole and have enough meat for a family of five to eat a whole week.
Canning Season was very hard work.

Yellow dent corn were use for pop corn in the cold winter months when we sat around the wood heater in the bedroom. Okra were cooked as is or made gumbo with tomatoes, onion, garlic, and peppers cooked together. Tomatoes were used for preserve. There were times when mother would make vegetable soup. She would take all the different canned vegetables, put them together, cook it, and then make corn bread. The only thing I never did cook were anything to do with flour dough and still don’t. I’m a good cook and can cook anything. I learn most of my cooking from experience, no receipts. I like to do a lot of experimenting, cooking anything as long as it doesn’t have to do with dough.

Other thing for cool dinner drinks were lemonade, wild tea, and vanilla flavor. Wild tea was a herb called tea weeds, which grew in the pastures and fields. You could either pull it green or pick it dry and put it in a paper sack. We collect it year round because it was also used for medicine for colds. For tea, take
the leaves, put in boiling hot water, strain, sweeten, put in a fruit jar, cool, and drink. Vanilla flavor you mix with water to taste, sweeten, and drink hot or cold. The drinks were made two hours before a meal, put in a gallon jug or fruit jar, and let down a well or lay in a spring along the creek bed. Summer time the ice man come twice a week. The ice were wrap in news papers and hemp sacks or grass (burlap) sacks, which were use for sacking grain or cotton seeds and put in a tub in the coolest room in the house, which was usually the back bedroom where I slept. You would buy as much ice as the money could afford.

I remember when I was a kid we would have been a lot more hungry some days if it had not been for a rabbit to eat. Even when thing got better rabbit was welcome site on the table until the late forties when the insecticide was introduce to the farmer, and the spraying of cotton for bugs and weed. It kill out the wild meat and the fresh wild fruits so what was once a meal to keep you from hungry become a meal for the volcher. Which become a bare spot on the ground.

To make myself clear the insecticide kill the small game rabbit, squirrel, and bird. The volcher-buzzard would eat the dead and in turn would die there. Any thing that die, the spot become a dead spot for a length of time. And then it become fertilize from the dead body and the spot would become a beautiful green spot.

I remember when I would come home on leave from the Army during the late forties and the fifties. I would help Dad out on the farm. When I would see dead game in the field. I ask Dad who kill them and he said all this new poisoning we using these days. And you can’t eat any thing out of the field. I remember asking Dad about the garden spot he all way had. He said any where you put a garden better be in your back yard. If you put it in the farm field you could not eat it after it was made ready beacause of the wide area of poison spray
drifting from airplane and ground spray rigs. The garden spot that once made us a living on the farm soon was no more. The wild fruit trees disappear. The small game vanish and the big black clean-up bird vanish. That why in this part of the country you hardly ever see these animal or fowl.