

SPICE ROUND

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SPICE ROUND

A traditional food during the Christmas season in Nashville is Spice Round, a delicacy especially typical of Middle Tennessee.

There are several firms today that make Spice Round, one of which is the Jacobs Packing Company. Mr. William Jacobs who founded the firm came originally from Whittenburg, Germany. In 1865, at the end of the war, he received his discharge from the army and returned to Nashville. In 1870, he opened a stall in the old Market House. In the 1872 City Directory he is listed as one of the city's butchers.

Mr. George Jacobs tells us that the Jacobs Packing Company packs about 30-40 thousand pounds of Spice Round every season. His recipe came from Hart and Hensley, a packing house established by two Englishmen at 1st Avenue and Madison. They packed only in the winter months. The city directory of 1872 lists them as one of two pork packers in the city and gives their location as 725 Market Street.

According to Mr. Jacobs the Maxwell House had Hart and Hensley's Spice Round on the menu around 1865. On the Maxwell House Christmas menu for 1879 there is listed "Hart and Hensley's Spice Round of Beef, en Sockle, Ornamented" and also "Hart and Hensley's (new) C.C.C. Hams."

Another firm whose name has long been a familiar one in the city as a packer of this delicious food is Alex Warner and Son. Today, the firm is operated by two grandsons of the founder of the firm.

The first Warner started in the meat business in Nashville about 1850. The great grandfather of the present owners having come over the-mountains from North Carolina after emigrating from Germany. He had six sons and one daughter who were also in the business with him.

One of the sons, Alex Warner, had married a Swiss miss from the settlement called Little Switzerland which was centered at Tenth Avenue,

South and Caruthers Avenue, the present site of Waverly-Belmont School. In 1867, he established his own business at what is now 17th and Heiman Streets. Its large windmill was a landmark in the fast growing city. It was there Mr. Warner originated his famous recipe which is as yet a closely guarded secret by his two grandsons. There are only two people who have the recipe and it is kept under lock and key in the vault at the present location of the firm at 1609 Charlotte Avenue.

Mr. Howell Warner is of the opinion that his grandfather originated the recipe for Spice Round along the idea of the Boar's Head so famous in England. However, according to Mr. Warner there were other German families--the Jacobs, the Fehrs, and the Powers--who had settled in Nashville and had gone into the meat business. They were a closely knit group and possibly discussed together a method to cure and preserve beef.

Mr. Howell Warner says that the famous recipe was developed from necessity. In September of each year the butchers would get a long run on beef round. To take care of the over supply, the rounds were put in brine and as there were no refrigerators, stored in the potato cellar. Then in October at "hog-killing time," there was a run on pork resulting in a surplus of fat from the back-strip. So even in the early days of our city there were surpluses but, thanks to the ingeniousness of our frugal ancestors, the surplus resulted in new and different food treats.

Spice Round is made out of a round steak, not necessarily the choicest piece of beef, cut about ten times as large as a normal steak. The spices were ground in an old coffee grinder, the same method used today, the surplus fat larded throughout the spiced beef with horns, the same sized ones used today. The original recipe called for salt petre, sugar and-salt; however, a commercial curing agent is used today, the basis of which is sodium nitrate. The rounds are then cured, not in the old potato cellar, but in modern refrigerators, from two to three weeks.

The first Spice Rounds were given by Mr. Warner to his friends and customers in boarding houses, restaurants and hotels at Christmas time. Word of mouth advertising spread the praises of this unusual delicacy and people began to try to buy them for their Christmas dinner. This same type advertising has continued until now. The rounds are shipped regularly to Honolulu, England, Austria, Alaska, Canada and practically every state in the forty-eight.

One day the present operators of the business received a call from a prominent lady in the city who had just returned from an extensive trip to Europe. In Vienna, she had been visiting friends and had dined in the most famous restaurants of the city. One evening before attending the opera they decided to dine in the friend's home. To the surprise and enjoyment of the Nashville lady, the piece de resistance at the dinner was a Spice Round cured by Alex Warner and Son in her own home town.

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In the City Directory of 1872 the following advertisement appeared.

Hart and Hensley

Pork Packers

General Commission Merchants and Curers of the Celebrated CCC Hams

Bulk meats, bacon, lard, flour, etc.

Our Specialties

CCC Hams -- CCC Breakfast Bacon

"Rolled Spiced Beef" and the celebrated pastry lard in all the various sized packages.

Warehouse and Office #72 South Market Street

Pork House - Corner, Front and Madison Street

There was also in this directory a list of butchers in the city some of whose descendants are still making outstanding contributions to the food tastes of our city.

BUTCHERS LISTED IN CITY DIRECTORY IN 1872

Coe, Adams - Stall #1 Market House

Coleman and Doubleday

Corbett, J. K.

Frith, J. H.

Grizzard, W. T.

Hagey, W.

Hagie, Charles

Hoff, George & John

Hoffman, A. J.

Houser, F. G.

Hawkins, Joseph

Jacob, W. M.

Johnston, L. H.

Kubu, T.

Lacroix

Laitenberger, C.

Laitenberger, C. C.

Linger, C.

Lopp, L. Lopp, Louis

Majors, W. T.

Miller, A.

Murphy, John

Park, Samuel

Power, C. P.

Price, C.

Scheirich, L.

Schutt, J.

Warner, Charles

Warner, L. A.

Warner, W. M.-Stall Central Market

Warner, W. M.-25 Market House
Warren, J. G.-Central Market

PORK PACKERS

Hart & Hensley-725 Market St.
Phillips, Hooper & Co.-56 S. Market