Farm to School Month – Week Two: Pork Day!!

PORK
Let’s learn about pork today!! Here in Alaska hog and pig production as well as the number of market hogs have both increased by 200 from 2014 to 2015 to 1,400 hogs and pigs. WOW!!

Why take a whole day to look at pork? Well, hog and pig production is growing in Alaska and had a value of production in 2015 of $515,000! Hogs and pigs are finding their place in the Alaska livestock scene as well as on the home-grower’s farms.

A Little History to put Pork in Alaska
In 1823 a pair of pigs were brought to Chemobura Island (near False Pass in the Aleutian Islands) and by 1826 they had increased to more than 100! A successful farmer near Fairbanks in the early 1900’s sold pork he raised on his 100-acre farm to the local people even though he specialized in produce. Around that same time, homesteaders were moving into the Matanuska Valley bringing their pigs along with them. An Annual Report by the US Bureau of Animal Industry from 1903, there were 145 hogs imported into Alaska in the last six months of 1903 worth $1,588.00. In 1934, after the Great Depression, an agricultural colony began in the Matanuska Valley where pigs also came into the State. Hogs were added to the McCollum’s farm in Delta Junction in 2000 where they raise them both for fresh and cured meat markets.

It was printed in 1887 in a Report Upon Natural History Collections Made in Alaska: Between the Years of 1877 and 1881 by Edward William Nelson that in Sitka, there is a story of how the ravens would interfere in livestock production on the island. Even though the pigs were too large for the ravens to devour, they instead cropped the pigs’ tails which was why Sitka pigs had no tails. That story was followed by a note that at the present time Sitka pigs’ tails were of normal length!
The Roots of Pork History

- According to fossil records, wild pig-like animals roamed the forests and swamps of Europe and Asia 40 million years ago.
- Pigs were domesticated in China by 4900 B.C.
- Europe began raising pigs by 1500 B.C.
- Hernando de Soto is dubbed the “father of the American pork industry.” In 1529, the explorer landed in Tampa Bay, FL, with America’s first 13 pigs on board.
- Production spread throughout the new colonies including Hernando Cortez introducing hogs to New Mexico in 1600 and Sir Walter Raleigh bringing sows to the colony in Jamestown, VA in 1607.
- On Manhattan Island, NY, a long, solid wall was constructed on the northern edge of the colony to protect the colonists as well as to keep the roaming herds of pigs out of their fields. This area is now known as Wall Street.
- Cincinnati was called “Porkopolis” around 1835 when it was the country’s chief hog packing center. In the 1840s, 250,000 pigs were processed annually.

Let’s Move into the Science of Pork

Pronunciation: pɔːk
Spanish name: Cerdo
Family: Suidae
Genus: Sus
Species: S. scrofa domesticus

Pork is the culinary name for meat from a domestic pig (Sus scrofa domesticus). It is the most commonly consumed meat worldwide, with evidence of pig husbandry dating back to 5000 BC. Pork is eaten both freshly cooked and preserved.

A pig is any of the animals in the genus Sus, within the even-toed ungulate family Suidae. Pigs include the domestic pig and its ancestor, the common Eurasian wild boar (Sus scrofa), along with other species; related creatures outside the genus include the peccary, the babirusa, and the warthog. Pigs, like all suids, are native to the Eurasian and African continents. Juvenile pigs are known as piglets. Pigs are highly social and intelligent animals.

With around 1 billion individuals alive at any time, the domestic pig is among the most populous large mammals in the world. Pigs are omnivores and can consume a wide range of food, like humans. Pigs can harbor a range of parasites and diseases that can be transmitted to humans. Because of the similarities between pigs and humans, pigs are used for human medical research.

How to Raise a Pig for Pork in Alaska?

According to farmer Brian Schmitt, owner of Funny Farm Feed Folks in Fairbanks, Alaska pig raisers consider themselves unconventional ranchers in the sense that they raise cold-hearty breeds that can withstand the elements and harsh weather of Alaska, and farmers don’t have to assume expensive costs of heating a barn or facility for seven to nine months out of the year.

Cold-hearty breeds include Berkshire, Large Black, Mangalista, and cross breeds of all of those.
Pigs are often used as 4-H and FFA project animals as they do require minimal housing and are omnivores (eat both vegetable and meat products). Are you thinking about raising your own pork? Here are some things to keep in mind from the Cooperative Extension Service:

- Buy feeder pigs (weaner pigs – about 40 lbs) in the springtime as they eat solid food and will be ready for slaughter in four to five months.
- The male feeder pigs should be castrated so the males and females you are raising can mingle without unwanted babies!
- You will want to raise your pigs to reach an average market weight of 210 lbs and you will lose 10-12% in the butchering process. This means you will need to feed that one pig about 595 lbs of feed! There are commercial, premixed feed sources you can buy.

- You need four pieces of equipment to make raising your pork a great experience:
  - A waterer – not expensive but they need fresh water to drink
  - A self feeder – a great purchase if you have more than one pig in your lot as this will reduce food waste
  - A plywood calf hutch-type structure – this will be great housing for two to three pigs
  - A sturdy fence – pigs are very smart and will learn to open gates, get through weak fencing, and dig large holes in short periods of time under poorly seated fences. To keep your pigs in their lot, you will want to use woven wire with a board around the bottom of the fence on the inside of the lot. You will want 60 sq ft of fenced space per pig.

**Reasons to Eat Pork**

A 3.5 oz of cooked pork provides:

- A great source of protein.
- An excellent source of several B vitamins thiamine, niacin, vitamin B12, riboflavin, and pantothenic acid.
- A mineral-rich meat that is an excellent source of selenium and zinc, a very good source of potassium, and a good source of iron and copper.

**What is Thiamine?**

- Thiamine is a B-complex vitamin, which is a family of water-soluble vitamins.
- All living cells require thiamine, as it plays a role in releasing energy from carbohydrates.
- Thiamine is sometimes called an “anti-stress” vitamin because it may strengthen the immune system and improve the body’s ability to withstand stressful conditions.
- Thiamine is found in both plants and animals.
- Low levels of thiamine can slow the body’s metabolism and make a person have trouble digesting carbohydrates.

**Some Great Pork Facts**

- The average American will eat the equivalent of 28 pigs in their lifetime.
- Pork tenderloin cuts are almost as lean as skinless chicken breasts.
- April 15th is Glazed Ham Day.
- Pork has more protein than chicken and is high in zinc, iron, and B-vitamins.
At the global level, pork is by far the most widely consumed meat. During the War of 1812, a meat packer named Uncle Sam Wilson sent off several hundred barrels of pork for the troops. Each package was labeled “U.S.” and it didn’t take long for “Uncle Sam” to be a household name for the government. Ham is the number one sandwich eaten in U.S. households. In Denmark, there are twice as many pigs as people.

Let’s eat . . .

Southwest Salad with Sliced Pork

Serves 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pork, cut into 1 to 2 bite-sized chunks</td>
<td>4 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>1 Tablespoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple juice</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild green chilies, 4.5 ozs. can</td>
<td>1 can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chili powder</td>
<td>1 Tablespoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumin, ground</td>
<td>1 teaspoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garlic powder</td>
<td>2 teaspoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregano, dried</td>
<td>2 teaspoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>½ teaspoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pepper</td>
<td>½ teaspoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salad greens</td>
<td>8 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scallions</td>
<td>8 scallions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>1 ½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes, fresh, diced</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheddar cheese, shredded</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tortilla chips, lightly salted</td>
<td>2 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salsa</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lime, cut in wedges</td>
<td>4 wedges</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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1. Mix chili powder, cumin, garlic powder, oregano, salt and pepper. Rub mixture on pork chops.
2. In a large pan, heat oil on medium-high heat. Once hot, place pork chops in pan to sear. Let brown, 4 to 6 minutes, then flip, cover pan, and brown for another 4 to 6 minutes. Lower heat and cook until pork reaches 145F.
3. Once pork is cooked through, remove from pan, and cover with aluminum foil. On low heat, add in apple juice and green chilies to pan. Stir and cook for 5 and turn off heat. After letting pork rest for 5 minutes, slice chops and place in the pan sauce.
4. To make salad, top salad greens with scallions, corn, tomatoes, cheddar cheese, salsa, and tortilla chips on the side.
5. Place sliced pork on top of salad, spooning sauce on top. Serve with lime wedge to squeeze on top. Enjoy!
Yummy Goodness and Tasty Tips!!

- Pork that is a pinkish-red color will provide a better eating experience. Avoid choosing meat that is pale in color and has liquid in the package.
- Look for pork that has marbling, or small flecks of fat. Marbling is what adds flavor.
- Avoid choosing any meat that has dark colored bone.
- The fat of the pork should be white with no dark spots.
- Pork is very lean and shouldn’t be overcooked. To check for doneness, use a digital cooking thermometer.
- The National Pork Board (following USDA guidance) recommends cooking pork chops, roasts, and tenderloin to an internal temperature between 145° F (medium rare) and 160° F (medium), followed by a 3-minute rest.
- Pork can be roasted or baked, broiled, grilled, barbecued, sautéed, braised, or stewed.

Digging in: Classroom or Home Learning Activities

- Make a chart comparing the nutrient values of the following pork products: pork chops (without toppings), tenderloin, ground pork patties, bacon (fried), ham (baked), and breakfast sausage. Use similar serving sizes (e.g., 3.5 oz) for each product. In your chart, include columns for calories, fat, carbohydrate, protein, vitamin C, vitamin B6, niacin, iron, fiber, sodium, and calcium. Describe the differences in fat, caloric, and nutrient content between these products. Draw conclusions as to why there are differences.
- Plan a meal that includes pork. The meal should be low in calories, fat, and sodium and provide at least 20% of the recommended Daily Value for iron, fiber, and calcium. Which pork recipe would you select? What other foods (grains, fruits, vegetables, meat/beans, dairy products) would you include to make a complete, balanced meal? Which vitamins are included in your meal?
- Research the history, uses, and folklore associated with pork in China and Denmark.

Library Connections. . .

- **Elementary:**
  - Little Oink by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Jen Corace
  - Olivia by Ian Falconer
  - The Three Ninja Pigs by Corey Rosen Schwartz and Dan Santat
  - Mercy Watson by Kate DiCamillo and Chris VanDusen
  - Charlotte’s Web by E. B. White

- **Secondary:**
  - The Te of Piglet by Benjamin Hoff
  - All Creatures Great and Small by James Herriot