TRICKS
OF THE
TRADE

COMPILED FROM MEMBERS OF THE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MEAT PROCESSORS

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The Tricks of the Trade is a session that has been held at the American Convention of Meat Processors for the past eight years. This session is a way to share, educate, and reward operators who have been creative, innovative, and willing to share something that works. Many members have exchanged shortcuts, innovations, or techniques to improve proficiency of manufacturing or services, a new product or a quality of product, and cost saving ideas. AAMP has collected these Tricks of the Trade and consolidated it for all members.

Do you have a shortcut, innovation, new product idea, cost-saving tip or technique which improves production, marketing, or the bottom line? Are you willing to share this “trick” with your fellow processors at AAMP? Send in as many as you wish. The one deemed most valuable will be awarded $100 at the Convention in Omaha, Nebraska.

We hope to see you in Omaha, Nebraska!

July 16 - 18, 2009
When bagging 5# bags of small piece product (sirloin cubes, stew beef, etc), cut a 4" diameter piece of PVC pipe 11 3/4". Stand pipe on end, slip bag on pipe and invert. Fill with product and pull pipe up and out. Adjust final product weight slightly for exactness.

Retail $50.00 Meat Bundles: Make choices of cuts for customers - saves time with each customer and keeps slow-moving cuts cleaned up.

Use a vacuum stuffer and plastic bags to bag ground beef in one-pound packages. (Idea given to him by Dennis Behrman, IL)

Have boxes custom made to fit on freezer racks. Wrap, then freeze in box - no need to transfer meat. (Idea given to him by Dennis Behrman, IL)

Ensure HACCP compliance for taking temperatures every 30 minutes: Install an automatic light and button in the room. Take temperature, push button, light will come on after 30 minutes pass.

To humanely handle livestock when receiving, tie a plastic garbage bag to the end of a stick to wave at a steer. At the cattle chute the steer is quick to run off the truck. (Truck driver Ira Welk first used idea).
“Always on Lights”- non-switch light installed in cooler rooms provide enough light to pass through the plant or check cooler room thermometers.

“Air Compressors on a Timer with a Plus” - start with 7 day-skipper clock and add a 1-hour wind up fan timer to add up to an hour of air without having to adjust time clock switch.

Pneumatic Tube - blows a molded plastic carrier for paperwork or money through a 3" pvc pipe saving time and traveling back and forth.

“Load Shed Relay on the Chopper” - to avoid peak demand electricity charges, install time delay relays in the refrigeration compressor starter circuits so that when the chopper motor starts, the compressors stop. When the chopper stops, the delay relays allow the compressors to start at different times.

“Water Saver” - to avoid leaking water due to connections, nozzles, washers, etc., install an electrically actuated full sized ball valve in the main water line with a tee branching out a 3/4 in. line to supply equipment that needs water constantly.

“Boiler Control”- install an extra pressure control in the control bank on the boiler with 3-ay switch in the pressure control wiring allowing for a night pressure control of 5psi & a day control of 65psi. Also install an electrically operated ball type steam valve downstream from the hand operated main valve controlled by another pressure control set at 25psi to avoid water lift, reduce pipe clanking and save energy during shutdown.

“Spare Parts” (bearings, seals, gears, belts, electrical parts) Invest in a quality set of measuring tools to help measure and locate most parts and investigate where these parts can be purchased outside of the OEM (original equipment manufacturer).

Involve Your Customers:
- Name new product contest
- Help spice new product
- Sample with customers
- Survey: what can we change to better serve you?
- Treat your customers the same - the Rolls Royce owner and the rust bucket owner.
- Have products for all.
- Write down date when you have a customer complaint and follow through - always give product or refund when customer takes time to tell you about a problem. (Keep a notebook with names and product problems. Do not be taken advantage of.)
- Solicit customer comments-pro & con.
Keep established products intact. Create and modify new products, doing 1 change at a time and recording what you do and your comments for each change.

You could have 15 lunchmeats and just 3 formulas for the base. Then add vegetables for one, shredded cheddar for another, parsley, chives, etc. Could use this idea to branch into brats for summer grilling.

Use deli bags for all cold meats, sirloin, and cheeses. Mount 2 screw heads anywhere by scales to slide meat off scale into bag. Very cost effective over butcher paper.

Local printer - 100 8x11 copies to keep customers informed and get printer as customer.

Buy from your state members what you do not make and promote it with free taste test for 30 days and nights to see if it will be a seller.

**SUBMITTED BY:** Norm Heinle  
The Sausage Shoppe  
Cleveland, OH

Reduce Holiday Stress:
- Give 10% discount for phone orders or e-mail two days in advance of pick-up
- Purchase boneless pork butts the week of a holiday
- When bagging, stuff an 81/2 x 11 coupon good only in Jan. or Feb. to try to bring in the 20% of extra holiday customers in again.
- Keep good production and sales notes for each holiday
- Promote all holidays! Special annual sales and 10% discount Thanksgiving Week as “Thank You for Being our Customer”

Promote your awards and let your customers know you go “to school” when attending national and local meetings.

Be Always the Same: examples given for chopping, mixing, smoking.

Keep Records:
- Keep track of customer names that order and do not pick up their order
- Keep track of staff shortcomings and good things as well.

Web page a necessity:
- Saves a lot of explaining and answering questions when a reporter wants a quick story. As you receive free PR, thank those involved and their bosses - offer food.
- Customers, present and future, go to your web page to see what you sell.
To make natural casings more pliable and easier to stuff, put sodium phosphate in water you soak your casings in. Use same type of phosphate you use in ham cure. It makes a big difference. Use approximately 3 oz. per gallon of water. For smoked sausages, add ½ oz. of sodium erythbate for the casing water for better smoke color.

In our retail store, we concentrate on custom meat cutting to order. It is always difficult when you ask a customer “How thick do you want your steaks cut?” A customer will respond by showing approximately how thick with his fingers, which looks like 2 inches, but in reality he wants his steaks cut 3/4 inch. Sometimes this can get very frustrating and meat cuts go to waste. I have designed a system which consists of 3 common size meat thicknesses whether it be a steak or a pork chop. I’ve cut 3 pieces of black walnut wood into steak shapes ranging in thickness of ½ inch, 3/4 inch, and 1 inch. These are displayed on top of the meat counter for every customer to view and actually see the thickness of the steak or shop to be desired. CASE CLOSED AND EVERYBODY IS HAPPY THEREAFTER!!

We have not had one complaint since we started inserting this “tip” to our bacon customers, concerning rancid bacon: For top quality and freshness, all CURED MEAT PRODUCTS, (ham, bacon, sausage, etc.) should be consumed within 90 days (3 months) after date on package. By educating the public to use up the cured products within 90 days, it puts the weight on the consumer’s shoulders and not the processor’s.

Created a new side of beef, front, hind and even bundles. All cuts are portion controlled from box beef. The customer knows exactly what they will receive and it will always be the same count and no waste! We’ve increased the number of steaks. In freezer, have storage bins for each cut of meat. Can fill any size order within minutes. Same idea for pork.
SUBMITTED BY:  Ray Berg  
Fordwich Meats  
Fordwich, Ontario  

With an animal having a broken hind shank, we hang the side by the achilles tendon only to remove shank (hangs well-no distortion in hip).  

In making garlic sausage, we mix regular & garlic together (+grinding) garlic spice is mixed by hand so that mixer need not be washed out. (Sped up processing - saved money)

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SUBMITTED BY:  Martin Luther  
Luther's Smokehouse  
LeRoy, KS  

Increase sales the easy way: Get a website and a mail order service. Collect e-mail addresses from all your customers who have them. More people have e-mail addresses than ever before. Send e-mail letters to them and any other potential customer (via a bulk e-mail program) asking if they would like reminders sent to them before special occasions like birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, etc. Have pictures of the potential gift boxes and products on your website or on the e-mail. Set up to-do’s on your computer as they are requested and let your computer send your advertising on the days requested. With a collection of local e-mail addresses, bulk e-mail can be used to advertise instead of newspapers, etc. Also, a website can be designed with a place just for your local community specials. You can change advertisement of specials yourself with the right education and design.

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SUBMITTED BY:  Frank Pelican  
Pelican Meat Processing  
Johnson, NE  

Faster and better job of shredding pork or beef: After you cook your meat, put it in your mixer and add some ice to cool it and make more juice. Turn it on and let it mix, off and on, till it is shredded well. Put mixer in cooler. Let cool, but keep mixing.

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SUBMITTED BY:  R. Komma  
Casper, WY  

“Process everything as though you would be the guest of honor at your customer's table.” Credit given to: Walt Komma
SUBMISSIONS FOR THE 2002 AAMP CONVENTION

SUBMITTED BY: Tess Crane  
Ralph’s Packing Co.  
Perkins, OK  

When cutting steaks we used to use the odd shapes & ends as trim or cube steak. Now we sell them as “miscuts” and get a much better price - people love them because they are cheaper than the “good” steaks. Making more money for same product. We noticed you could buy miscuts from the catfish companies.

SUBMITTED BY: Jacob Hill  
Real Kosher Sausage  
New York, NY  

Broken EQT? I went to a large processor and hired his mechanic to oversee my EQT and repairs in his spare time. It does not conflict with his day job at all. It has lowered our costs for repairs and the mechanic has permission to use his machine shop.

SUBMITTED BY: Glenn Roberts  
Glenn’s Market & Catering  
Watertown, WI  

Meat Handler Computer Program sold by Meat Handler Company, A Division of New Age Computer Systems. It was installed in 1989. Profits continue to rise because we control cost.

SUBMITTED BY: Tess Crane  
Ralph’s Packing Co.  
Perkins, OK  

We made a wooden wall calendar that has 35 9 ½” x 9 ½” squares on it. Each square has 2 cup hooks - one holds a bull dog clip & the other holds a 2” x 2” plexiglass date square. Across there are squares with M, T, W, TH, F, SA, SU so each month you just move the date piece. During the busy seasons each days tickets are clipped to that date. This has helped keep up with what’s needed on what date. Especially on Thanksgiving & Christmas.

SUBMITTED BY: Norm Eggen  
Old Country Deli  
San Luis Obispo, CA  

Freeze ice flat in 3-mill barrier vac-pac bags. Place bags in bottom of ice chest with meat on top. Keeps product cool and from getting water logged on way to contest.
**Submissions for the 2003 AAMP Convention**

**Submitted by:** Kevin Western  
Western's Smoke House  
Greentop, MI

When producing meat sticks, you normally end up with a bunch of ends. We take those ends & vacuum bag them in 6 oz. bags & sell them at a slightly reduced price. We call them Stick Ends. We get rid of our end without having to re-work them. This also helps to not complicate our HACCP plan.

**Submitted by:** Randy Ream  
Elburn Market Inc.  
Elburn, IL

Instead of tomatoes at the end of a shish kabob use smoked sausage. An extra 650 lbs. of smoked sausage was sold at shish-k-bob prices.

**Submitted by:** John Hamm  
Wisconsin River Brands  
Mauston, WI

We publish our deer hunting guide yearly. Ads in it more than cover the printing cost and it gets our name out statewide. Customers enjoy it and ask for it. We mail them to customers throughout the USA. We mostly give them away free. It has given us statewide recognition and established us as a leader in Wisconsin in venison processing.

**Submitted by:** Terry Moench  
T.M Moody’s Quality Meats  
Corpus Christi, TX

Make Tomorrow Conversions Today - steaks that are in cuts or will not sell for one reason or another, bone out, defat and cut into strips. Like ribbon, place on skewer and season (we make Carribean jerk kabob). Marinate with liquid. Sell as each or pound.

Still using carcass cattle; but supplement with boxed beef. Using top butts or top sirloins. Defat top sirloin, lift coolot muscle off of primary loin muscle and see as tri tip on coolot steak and then sell primary loin muscle as heart of the loin steak for more than top sirloin because it is leaner and more attractive. Sell coolot for as much as boneless sirloin or if they backup defat and use for stir fry steak or go into marinated kabob meat on skewers or strip for jerk meat.
In our meat market, we specialize in “custom cutting to order”, pork chops, steaks, etc. Customer comes in the store to order 4 steaks....My question to them is “How thick would you like the steaks cut?” The customer has not perception about thickness at all. I came up with the solution to create a SIZING BOARD, made out of Black Walnut, displayed on top of the meat counter. (See enclosed photo). It is really a handy gadget that is used everyday and the customers like it so they can see exactly the thickness they are going to receive.

When merchandising your beef stix or beef jerky, try to get away from packing everything in 1 or 2 oz. packages. Put them in 8 oz or 12 oz - even 1 lb. packages. Cheaper price per pound but you sell more product. We sell 10 times as many 1 lb. packages of jerky than we do 2 oz. packages. Means extra profit. Use the wholesale club selling methods. Yes, we sell more stuff.

We have a home designed stainless extruder attachment that will put out 12 jerky strips at a time to fill the whole screen, filling one screen after another laying on a conveyor. The Hantmann Stuffer puts out a 24v. signa to operate the cutter during each pause.

I read somewhere you can substitute dried fruit for nitrates. I tried making ground and formed jerky with raisins and it works!

Hot dog peeler - PVC pipe the diameter of the hot dog, place edge razor blade in one end & pull hot dogs thru.

One of our “tricks of the trade” is to make notes on the bottom of each deer cutting paper to record any damage done to the deer by the hunter. All we do is check (see the highlighted part of our instruction sheet) the appropriate category(ies) to identify any damaged areas. That way, if a customer has questions about the quantity of his meat, we can show him where he lost
some. Also, this shows the hunter that we do in fact process each deer separately and know specific information on his deer.

We use volume measurement tubes to measure our spices for various weight batches of sausage, etc. Each tube is clearly, carefully marked for every 5 pounds of meat. We use a smaller tube for a premix of erythorbate, phosphate & cure. This saves a lot of time, especially on wild game processing where batch sizes vary a great deal.

**SUBMITTED BY:** Brad & Michelle Garvin
Garvin Meats
Franklin, NE

We used to have a lot of trouble making sausage patties because they would gum up the patty machine (sticky). Now we stuff them in either the 2# bags or 5# bags & freeze it. When it's froze, you peel off the plastic bag & cut it on the saw. The size of the bag and thickness determine the weight of the patty. Saves time & energy - patties are uniform in size - customers like the “Jimmy Dean” size patties the 2# bags make.

**SUBMITTED BY:** Russ Karpisek
Karpisek's Market
Wilber, NE

We run a water line to our processing table so casings can be flushed with water just prior to stuffing. Our line has a ball valve on it so all you have to do is pull on the spigot and water will fill the casing. The casings go on the horn easier, they are rinsed out with clean water and it is much faster than “scooping” water into the casing.
SUBMISSIONS FOR THE 2004 AAMP CONVENTION

SUBMITTED BY: John Hamm
Wisconsin River Brands
Mauston, WI

Every year we produce a deer processing guide (enclosed). It helps our business very much. It brings us new customers and gets us recognition in the community.

SUBMITTED BY: Robert Beisbier
Kewaskum Frozen Foods
Kewaskum, WI

Due to BSE regulations for 2004, the spinal column must be removed on all beef animals 30 months or older. We find it easier to remove the spinal column on the kill floor as part of the splitting process.

Step #1: Loosen kidney fat and tenderloin all the way up the sirloin area so that hangs free.
Step #2: Run sharp knife on either side of spinal column from tailbone thru neck area. Stay as close as possible to the bone.
Step #3: Take splitting saw or wells saw and cut down on either side of spinal column. When the meat is properly loosened from spinal column area, very little meat is lost. Approximately thirty (30) pounds of total bone and meat is lost. You have a choice to add 15# to each half or not. Our plant charges an extra $15 per beef for this procedure.

SUBMITTED BY: Randy Alewel
Alewel’s Country Meats
Warrensburg, MO

To aid in freezing customers meat during deer season we add 10# dry ice to 35-45# meat. You can close the box and move it out of the blast to the holding freezer in 24 hours. *Caution: Must do in well ventilated area. We have a small blast freezer and that allows us to process more meat and it speeds up the boxing process because it is ready load out. (Cost of ice in bulk is = .22 per #)

SUBMITTED BY: Mary Chambliss
Ole Smokehouse
Green Pond, AL

At Christmas for people on limited incomes and kids that want to give gifts to their friends, use santa’s Christmas stockings or bottle bags and using some jerky or sausage, drop in stocking or bag with tissue & you have gifts for around $5.00. More people have been able to enjoy our products than normally would have. After Christmas is the time to stock up on supplies.
**Submitted by:**  
Sam Western  
Western’s Smoke House  
Greentop, MI

Save all your beef rib bones & all of your beef shank bones. Take your leftover ham & bacon cure brine and soak the bones in the brine overnight. Take the bones out of the brine and cook them in the smokehouse and sell them for dog treats. We sell the rib bones for $1.00 and the shank bones for $5.00 each.

**Submitted by:**  
Bob Filbrandt  
Bob’s Processing  
South Haven, MI

We are a small processor without a loading dock. When we get in cattle and roasting hogs it was always a hassle getting them off the truck. We use to have to put something on the floor of the truck and drop them down and carry them in to our rail. Now we built this cage to go on our forklift and roll them on to the cage or lift them over and then roll over to our rail and roll them in. A lot less back work and a lot faster. Not to mention the inspectors are happy.
When we owned a meat plant & retail store, we would keep an electric fry pan going in the retail area. When customers came in, the aroma of cured and smoked meats would greet them and many would ask “what smells so good?” We would use odds & ends to create the atmosphere. I’m sure it helped our bacon & ham sales and helped cover up any odor from the kill floor.

Dog bones, pig front shank & ham femur bones. Sugar cure & smoke. Sell for $150 each. Also, we now buy femur bones about .35/lb. Custom bones are free. Approximately $7000.00 extra profit this year.

We installed a dock light that swings onto the front door frame of the smokehouse for easy reading of temp. On products coming out of the dark smokehouse. It is easier to read HACCP required temp readings on product and to perform maintenance on house.

Having been in business for 40 years, we’ve had a few animals escape while being unloaded for slaughter. While this has occurred very few times, it has been costly and sometimes embarrassing. Well, not anymore. We've installed an eight-foot tall steel drive-thru perimeter fence. It has gates for the trucks and trailers to enter and exit on both ends. Should an animal get out, the outer perimeter fence would contain it.

Use a propane week burner to burn the hair off deer carcasses. The intense heat singes the hair and apparently kills bacteria on the carcass. We have stopped washing the carcasses and eliminated mold, extend holding time at least 5 days. Increase holding time during peak of gun season, saves water, gets rid of hair.
Submitted by: Mark Gentert
Gentert Packing Co.
Holstein, NE

We use to slice fresh side pork on the slicer, but we were given the idea of freezing the bellies, then cutting the slices on the saw. Easier to handle frozen slices versus raw or par frozen. By not introducing raw product on our deli slicer, we save on clean up time and we don't have to worry about customers wanting deli meats while we are in the middle of slicing side pork. Credit: Al Kimminaw - Cordova Locker
**Submissions for the 2006 AAMP Convention**

**Submitted by:** Robert T. Shanahan  
Bob’s Custom Meats  
North Bend, NE

I distribute (the week prior to deer season) to bars and deer check-in stations. I take deer season posters, beef sausage samples as well as samples of our other products. The check-in stations look forward to this yearly and brag us up. Also, I include a stack of our newest business cards with the sausage.

We get numerous customers each year telling us how they tasted our products at the check-in stations and couldn’t resist bringing their deer to us.

**Submitted by:** Terri Houser  
Houser Meats  
Rushville, IL

Make your own web site. It isn’t that hard. Use a site builder with templates. I used [www.tripod.com](http://www.tripod.com). My site has a map, prices, copy of cutting instructions, questions to help fill out instructions, deer prices & information and pictures of retail area & building.

The web site saves a lot of time on the phone. When someone calls with price questions or wonders what we have or how to get here. I ask if they have internet access. (Yes.) Then I give them our website address. Most of the time that is all they want. A five-minute conversation instead of twenty minutes. You don’t have to be a big company to have a website.

**Submitted by:** Melvin Edes  
Edes Custom Meats Ltd.  
Amarillo, TX

Develop and make products that can’t be bought anywhere else. We have 34 kinds of raw and smoked sausages, seasoned loin back ribs, seasoned dog t-bones, and seasoned & vacuum packed ready-to-cook steaks.

This keeps customers coming back and bragging about you.

**Submitted by:** Shelly Tiefenthaler  
Food Locker Service, Inc.  
Holstein, LA

Send a “Dear Valued Customer” letter with their next scheduled slaughter date and a copy of their previous cut order. Send out one week before scheduled slaughter date.

This has helped so much! I am no longer chasing people for their orders as much and I am able to get other stuff done. Customers love it! They know when the slaughter date is and also they can look at the cutting instructions and make changes if need be.
**Submitted By:** Roger Van Hemelryk  
Maplewood Meats  
Green Bay, WI

Use a pizza warmer to display your customer samples, that the customer would normally eat warm. We can display four products at a time. Great way to introduce new product. Increase in sales.

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**Submitted By:** Ed Woods  
Woods Smoked Meats  
Bowling Green, MO

Tips for making products with Jalapeno and Cheese. I like to use dehydrated ¼ in. diced Jalapeno’s. Use them at a ratio of 1 lb. dry Jalapeno per 100 lb. of meat. Rehydrate them in 6 lb. water to 1 lb. of Jalapeno. Add a little vinegar to bring out more heat in the Jalapenos. Soak mixture for 15 to 20 minutes, before adding to sausage batter. For the cheese, use only Hi-Temp, no melt cheese. American, Pepper Jack, or Cheddar Cheese will work nicely depending on the product you are making. I prefer the 1/8 in. diced size, because it mixes in the product better and gives the product a smoother cut surface appearance. Use at a ratio of 5 to 10 percent cheese in your meat block, which equates to 5 to 10 lb. cheese per 100 lb. of product, depending on your preference. When you are making the product, add the cheese and jalapenos as the last ingredient in the mixer, being careful not to over mix and smear the cheese. Do not regrind after mixing, unless you want very small particle definition.

Helped sausage sales, buy offering new flavors and variation to smoked sausage, summer sausage, and snack sticks. Most people like spicier food flavors now.

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**Submitted By:** Tom Dewig  
Dewig Meats  
Haubstadt, IN

To keep condensation from forming on a frozen windowed retail box of meat, try freezing the box upside down. Condensation will form in the void of the box causing the condensation to be on the bottom of the box, not on the window.

When displaying the box of beef patties or brats in a freezer the customer can easily view the product without a frosted window.
SUBMISSIONS FOR THE 2007 AAMP CONVENTION

SUBMITTED BY: Jon Frohling
Frohling Meats Inc.
Hecla, SD

Every year we host a brat contest with the local 4th grade classes. The students are asked to name their brat and then describe what is in it. We then set up a time for the students to come in and tour our plant. Prior to their visit we make as many of the brat ideas that we can possible make. After the tour, the students then sample all of the different brats we made from their ideas. At the conclusion of the day we have an awards ceremony where each student is brought up front, introduced, and then we talk about their brat and what they could have done different or what was really good about their brat. At the end we pick three winners, take their picture for the paper and then they are given several packages of their brat to take home to their family. After the tour we set up a day with the winners to sample their brat to the public and allow the public to purchase their brats. On the label of each brat we put the ingredient statement and then the name of the student that came up with the idea.

We get some really great ideas from the students and once they see their name on the label of the brat, they bring in all of their friends and relatives to see it. Kids have awesome imaginations and they also influence their parents purchasing decisions. This has been one of the best advertising techniques we have used. One of the winning brats from a past year has become one of our top sellers.

SUBMITTED BY: Jeremy Johnson
Conger Meat Market
Conger, MN

As a retail exempt plant, we must sell our products to the end user. We have bypassed this by having a small portion of our sausage products in thirteen stores in thirteen close by, but smaller towns. In return we have gained new customers, regular customers into our home store.

No ad in the newspaper does what having someone from out of town try your products. Also, most of the time, not always, a larger federal plant can make the sausage products even cheaper then we can.

SUBMITTED BY: Sam Western
Western's Smokehouse
Greentop, MO

In our retail store we try to display items that are meat complimentary. In addition to spices, seasonings, charcoal, wood chips, etc., we display and sell baking potatoes. We display them in a nice basket right by the register. We sell them individually or in packs of three.

Displaying and selling items such as these has given Western’s more shopping appeal because our customers do not have to make several stops to do their shopping. This equals more sales.
Submitted by:  Tess Crane
Ralph’s Packing Co.
Perkins, OK

To smoke cheese we fill 5 lugs 2/3 full of water and freeze for 2 days. Then we dump the ice in
the bottom of the smokehouse and place cheese on screens and smoke with natural smoke. The
ice will keep the temperature below 75°. We can smoke most any cheese this way.

We are able to smoke cheeses without melting and get at least $1.00 per pound or more.
We put motion detectors on our light switches in low use rooms like store rooms, break room, even the inspectors office. Everyone remembers how to turn lights on, but they forget how to turn them off. You open the door or walk in, lights on, you leave and 30 seconds later lights out!!

Any time we can save wasted (non-productive) electricity it helps all of reduce our power bills.

For the past 8 years, Cloud's has used two ozone generators in the plant. An ozone generator is a small device that has a corona charger inside that simulates lightning in the earth's atmosphere. This action changes the oxygen (O2) passing through the machine to ozone (O3). This charged arc is similar in size and arc to a spark plug. Ozone has the ability to break down the nucleus of bacteria, therefore releasing the DNA, preventing the bacteria from reproducing. Ozone is effective on all bacteria including pathogens. Odors are also greatly reduced.

One generator in our plant is placed in the carcass aging cooler to reduce odor and bacterial counts for swabbing. The CFU counts for swabs on beef and hog carcasses became so low; my inspector's supervisor required them to watch me perform swabs to make sure I was actually testing the carcass! During deer season there is virtually no smell from the cooler, and eliminates wild game odor transfer to beef and pork carcasses.

The second generator is placed in the room that separates the kill floor from the rest of the plant. Thus, reducing mold and unpleasant smells that could drift into fabrication, packaging, and retail areas.

Ozone generators are small, virtually silent, and inexpensive. We plugged ours in 8 years ago and haven't touched them since. They are the same units that are found in home use hot tubs and can be purchased through spa dealers. Our two units have more than paid for themselves, in savings on acid carcass wash, and the labor associated with the application.

We make a smoked sausage stick out of many different varieties of meat including beef, buffalo, yak, ostrich, venison, and goose. We were having trouble getting them cut to a uniform size, so Chuck made a box out of plastic (cutting board material) with notches on the sides to the correct length. He lays the sticks in the box and inserts the knife in the slots horizontally. The ends get packaged (and sold) separately, but the sticks in the package are all the same length.

This makes for a nice, neat package if sold with more than one in a package.
We use a stunning gun in our beef slaughtering operation. The salesman told us that the shells and gun will no longer be available to purchase, so Chuck bought shells for future use. He was concerned about the shelf life of the shells, so he vacuum packaged them for longer shelf life.

Plan your production for the day. Have a table for all ingredients that will be used in each product for the day.

We make a beer brat. One 12 oz. can Michelob per 4 lbs of meat. 32 lb. batch = 8 beers. Jack Daniels is 1 ½ oz. per pound of meat. 20 lb batch is 30 oz. Double cheese brat is 1 oz. fine shredded Wisconsin cheddar and 1 oz. coarse shredded Wisconsin cheddar per pound. 30 lb. meat is 30 oz. each cheese.

This way you can be grinding or chopping without constantly washing up and going to the scales and spice room.

In our retail area we have up a 3’ x 4’ map of the United States. The map is designed to place push pins in it. Under the map we have a registry book where our customers can register their name and address. When they have done so we place a push pin into the city they are from.

This has been a great conversation piece for our customers and it helped us build up a solid mailing list for our mail order business.

We have a web page listing our hours, directions (because a main bridge to get to us is out) products and their availability. In the summer months we rotate 21 flavors of brats and we list which are available each week on the brat age of our website www.sausageshoppe.com. In this 24-7 time we feel it is very important that you can also order on the web 24-7.

We try to schedule ahead days of the week for maintenance, production, etc. All employees then know what we plan to do for that day.
On production days we have all of the non-meat ingredients weighed and ready to make the day smooth. With so many flavors of brats we find this especially helpful. One person dices the green peppers, banana cherry peppers, jalapenos and weighs them for the batch we are going to make. Then we do not have to stop. We use 1 ounce of non-meat ingredients per 1 pound of meat. Example: an 80 pound batch of cheese brats uses a 5 pound bag of shredded cheddar.

Our liquid ingredients such as Jack Daniels, Captain Morgan rum, and Michelob beer are also used 1 ounce per pound.

We use a credit card just for the business automatic charges. Our monthly dumpster, phone, cell phones, high speed internet, cable, electric, security, accountant, local newspaper, are all dumped automatically on a charge card. We then have Pittsburgh Spice and Casing, Zep Cleaning Products, Ohio Dept. of Workers Compensation, gasoline charges all on card. The Capital One card then lets you fly anywhere. Once you have booked the flight, you yourself go into their web page and pay for the flight with your points. It is a much better deal then gift cards.

We make a lot of different sausages. We use a 100# base and make 5-20# batches. Each one is different and each batch usually yields 100 brats. You should add your areas favorite items - cherries favorite peppers or ale. We also use the base for different shapes. Example: our German brats are a link item. We then add garlic and rope the product to make our Kielbasi. We then us a Colizimo press to make our award winning jerky. Then we stuff part of the batch into 120 mm by 26 in. fibrous casing to make our summer sausage that we slice. The same batch is used for a stick product 70 mm. by 18 in. that is only sold in a chunk.

For us the middle of the month used to be a bummer. We offer special products only available the middle weekend of the month closest to the 15th. A customer brought her mom over from Poland to live with her. She and her mom make 3 flavors of pierogi for us only that weekend. We offer a ham salad, pickle and pimento loaf, German wiener with cheese only that weekend. This has helped us through the years make the 15th a very good weekend. We also do a last weekend of the month special. We offer a spicy Kielbasi, and a hot and spicy Dutch loaf. Those that want it hot remember to shop that weekend.
Submitted by: Mark Gentert  
Gentert Packing Company  
Holstein, NE

We have all processed an exceptionally fatty animal with excessive waste. So, to avoid being questioned on “where’s all my meat”? We keep the inedible barrel on a floor scale and weigh the waste, and we also vacuum seal the first cut of a t-bone, and leave it untrimmed. So the untrimmed steak “paints the picture” to the customer of what the beef looked like. We also use the recall on our scale and print the exact number of wrapped packages (steaks, roast, etc.) that the customer is taking home.

It has almost eliminated any questions on our integrity because we are “laying everything in front of them”. The producer really enjoys seeing the untrimmed steak.

Submitted by: Martin Luther  
Luther’s Smokehouse  
LeRoy, KS

We used to have trouble selling the smaller pieces of jerky that came about after slicing and cooking. Since our customers thought they might be inferior we started packing the pieces in their own package and labeling them “popcorn size” and now we sell all we make.

Increased the bottom line.

Submitted by: Ed Woods  
Woods Smoked Meats  
Bowling Green, MO

Merchandising Cooked BBQ Ribs with Sauce - Here is a great way to sell all your miscut or NO.2 ribs; also your ends and pieces of back ribs and St. Louis style ribs. You can even purchase NO.2 ribs from certain packers for around $1.00 per pound, and this is a super way to merchandise them.

First we dry rub all the rib pieces with our BBQ spice, either by hand or putting them in the tumbler with about 5% spice weight added to meat. (5 lb. dry rub to 100 lb. ribs) After seasoning, we lay the rib pieces on racks in our CookShack smoker; or any other brand would work fine. The meat is smoked and cooked for 3 to 3.5 hours at 225 degrees. After cooling, the ribs are cut between every bone or every other bone, small enough to pick up and eat.

Once cooking, cooling and cutting are finished, we weigh out 3.5 lbs. of ribs into an aluminum half size steam table pan. We then pour 1.5 lbs. of BBQ sauce over the ribs. This is done over a scale, so each unit weighs 5 lbs. net weight. The lid and label are applied, then wrapped in freezer film and are now ready to be sold.

The key to merchandising this product is to price the ribs by the unit, example; 5 lb. of Ribs for one money. A fully cooked 5 lb. pan of ribs could retail for $9.95 to $14.95 each or whatever price your customers are willing to pay. This item is also great for use in meat bundles and freezer packs.

Your customers will love this product, the ribs are quick and easy to prepare, no hassle, less mess, and no standing over a grill. You can take cooked ribs from the refrigerator, to the oven, to the dinner table in less than one hour.
Use a Styrofoam tray floating in a bucket of very hot water. Insert your dial temp probes, dial or smokehouse probes. Push at the same time and check the hot side of all your thermometers. You can calibrate all your probes and houses so when you check your product you will be sure it will be done to your specifications.

It has given us more peace of mind to make sure our product is done to the right temps. We use a pre-calibrated data logger in the water to make sure we are where we should be and also gives us verification that our process is right.