



Bite & Sip: Drier's Meat Market-a family tradition of culinary excellence

Jane Ammeson Apr 8, 2013



Drier's Sausage. Caroline Drier's family has run this business for 100 years.
Tony V. Martin, Shore Magazine



Drier's Sausage, Three Oaks, Mich.
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Ed Drier was 10 years old when he first started working as a delivery boy, earning 25 cents a week at the Union Meat Market in downtown Three Oaks, Michigan. The butcher shop, owned by Englishman Alec Watson and located in what was formerly a wagon repair shop, already was well established, having opened for business in 1875. Drier would go on to clerk for the market, his wages rising to a princely \$6 a week and by 1913, he had saved enough to buy the business, renaming it Drier's Meat Market. In time, his son Ed Drier Jr. would take over, smoking the hams and stuffing the sausages that have been the tradition here since the 1800s.

Over the years, the fortunes of Three Oaks have waxed, waned and then waxed again. Carolyn Drier, who as a youngster used to ride her bike to work in her father's store, remembers the time not so long ago when Drier's was one of the few businesses still going on the block. But now, Three Oaks has re-emerged, its historic downtown bustling with thriving stores and restaurants, a movie theater, winery and theater all housed in renovated Victorian era commercial buildings.

Drier's has changed very little. Its pre-Civil War front includes four-paned windows that pre-date plate glass. Entrance is through a century old wooden screen door into a room where the planked flooring is strewn with sawdust. Ask for Drier's bologna (a secret family recipe of all-beef with salt and pepper in a natural casing and shaped like a horse shoe) and Carolyn Drier will take a ring down from the many meat hooks that have been hanging from the ceiling since Watson first opened the market and slice off the amount you want. Pick out the freshly made brats or the house made country paté-like liver sausage or the 4-year aged Herkimer County white cheddar cheese and Drier weighs and then wraps the meat in white butcher paper, adding up the totals in black ink on the outside of the paper. The hams and bacon on display come from the century plus smokehouse outback.

Drier's may be celebrating their hundredth anniversary this year, but that doesn't mean they've gone modern.

"We were placed on the National Registry of Historic Places in the 1970s," says Drier who adds, showing a knowledge probably born of their many Chicago customers, "My dad always said, that isn't something you can give a case of whiskey to someone to get that designation."

Despite being a small town butcher shop, Drier's has famous fans. The recently deceased actor Larry Hagman liked their hams and tucked away on the shelves amidst condiments and crackers is a letter he wrote extolling their taste. Nearby, is a photo of Carl Sandburg taken by famed photographer Edward Steichen. Sandburg had a summer home nearby and this was a favorite place.

Carolyn Drier returned to the store full force after divorcing in 1988 (she's since remarried) and though the days are long, she has no plans to retire anytime soon.

"When my dad died in 1994 I knew I wanted to try to keep the market open," she says, pausing to contemplate even the thought of retiring. "It's kind of unsettling to say goodbye to your parents when they're going to Florida and then getting a call saying your father died."

But she says, waxing philosophical, it probably was best it happened so quickly after a lifelong enjoyed of working in the business that he loved, because it would have been too hard emotionally for him not to be able to physically come into the store every day.

"I never want that to happen to me either," she says. "I can't even picture myself not being here."

Not surprisingly, given that she grew up around food, Carolyn Drier loves to cook.

"Reading a cookbook is like a novel for me," she says. And so several years ago, Drier decided to put together a cookbook.

"I thought it would be great to have a cookbook for all of our products," she says noting that she has been collecting recipes for decades.

The book, Dining Designed by Driers: Carolyn's Collection (Key Ingredient \$23) is 240 pages and is sold at the store. "Some of the recipes are quite old," says Drier, "such as my grandmother's Sweet and Sour Green Beans with Bacon. I associate the smell of food with a place in time and this recipe is my grandma's cottage in Gull Lake."

Drier's not only smokes hams, bacon, they make their own mustard, seasoning salts, links of liver sausage so rich that it tastes like pate and even their own hot dogs.

“We have five different ways to do macaroni cheese using my wonderful cheddar,” says Drier. “One is a Crockpot recipe that you don't even have to cook the noodles beforehand. I also have recipes for ham because people are always asking for them and I include tips on how to slice it so it goes further.”

Since the early 1900s, Drier's has been making a German bologna (which is not anything like what is sold in grocery stores) that Drier describes as more like a salami in a natural casing.

“Our bologna is good eating just the way it is,” says Carolyn Drier, “but I also include recipes for using it too.”

Kielbasa Pasta Salad

16 ounces spiral pasta

1 ½ cups thinly sliced Drier's bologna or polish sausage

2 ¼ ounce can sliced ripe olives, drained

¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese

1 cup mayonnaise

3 tablespoons cider vinegar

1 envelope Italian salad dressing mix

1 cup salad croutons

Cook pasta, drain and rinse in cold water. Place pasta in a large bowl, add sausage, olives and cheese. In a small bowl, combine the mayonnaise, vinegar and salad dressing mix. Stir into pasta mixture. Add croutons and toss to coat. Serve immediately.

Honey-Orange Glazed Ham

8-pound Drier smoked ham

2 tablespoons orange juice

1 cup honey

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon ground cloves

In a small bowl, combine orange juice, honey cinnamon and cloves. Mix well. Place ham on rack in shallow roasting pan. Roast in a 325-degree oven for 1-1/2 to 2 hours or until meat thermometer registers 135 to 140 degrees, basting with the honey glaze during the last 45 minutes.

June Drier's Ham Loaf

1 ½ Drier's ham ground

1 pound fresh ground pork

1 cup bread crumbs

1 tablespoon brown sugar

½ cup chopped onion

½ cup chopped green pepper

2 eggs

1 tablespoon Drier's mustard

1 teaspoon Drier's seasoning salt

Mix all together. Put in loaf pan and bake one hour at 350. Good quality, freshly smoked bacon is rich with flavor. One of Carolyn Drier's favorite recipes is to caramelize the bacon with a syrup made of brown sugar and water with just a touch of red pepper to add some zest.

Caramelized Bacon

12 slices Drier's thick-sliced bacon

½ cup light brown sugar, packed

2 tablespoons water

½ teaspoon ground red pepper

Preheat oven to 375. Line cookie sheet pan with foil. Spray wire rack with Pam and place rack in pan. Cut bacon in half, arrange in single layer on rack. Combine sugar, water and red pepper. Brush over bacon. Bake bacon for 20 to 25 minutes or until browned. May be prepared ahead for up to three days.

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