



## Collection Corner: Smokehouse

A smokehouse is a building where meat or fish is cured with smoke. The finished meat might be stored in the building, sometimes for a year or more. Food preservation occurred by salt curing for six weeks and cold smoking for two weeks or longer. The salting was a very important step in the preservation process. The salt would remove the moisture from the meat which would prevent mold and rot from setting in and spoiling the food. Smokehouses were always secured to prevent animals and thieves from accessing the food. The meat was hung to keep it safe from varmints.

Prior to the widespread availability of electricity and freezers, meat was preserved by heavy salting. Hogs were slaughtered in the fall, and hams and other pork products were salted and hung for storage. The meat would last into the following summer. Whether the meat should be smoked as well as salted is personal preference, usually according to local or family custom.

Traditionally, a smokehouse is a small enclosed building with a vent at the top, a single entrance, no windows and usually a pyramid-style roof. Below is a picture of the smokehouse at the Carroll County Farm Museum – you can still smell the smoke through the door. Communal and commercial smokehouses were larger than those that served a single family. The slightly warmed, but dry air from a slow hardwood fire ensured the proper drying of the meat.

**What kind of meat would you preserve in a smokehouse if you had one?**





## Ham & Bean Soup Recipe

Ham was a staple from the smokehouse that could be stored and used all winter long.



### Ingredients:

- 1 pound dry great Northern beans
- 8 cups water
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 ham hock or ham bone
- 1 cup chopped carrots
- ½ stalk celery, chopped
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon mustard powder
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 cups chopped ham
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper

### Instructions:

1. Rinse the beans, sorting out any broken or discolored ones. In a large pot over high heat, bring the water to a boil. Add the salt and the beans and then remove from the heat. Let the beans sit in the hot water for at least 60 minutes to soak.
2. After the 60 minutes of soaking, return the pot to high heat and add the ham bone, carrots, celery, onion, garlic, mustard powder and bay leaves to the pot. Stir well and bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low and simmer for 60 more minutes.
3. Remove the ham bone and discard. Stir in the chopped ham and simmer for 30 more minutes. Season with ground pepper to taste. Refrigerate any leftovers once cooled.