

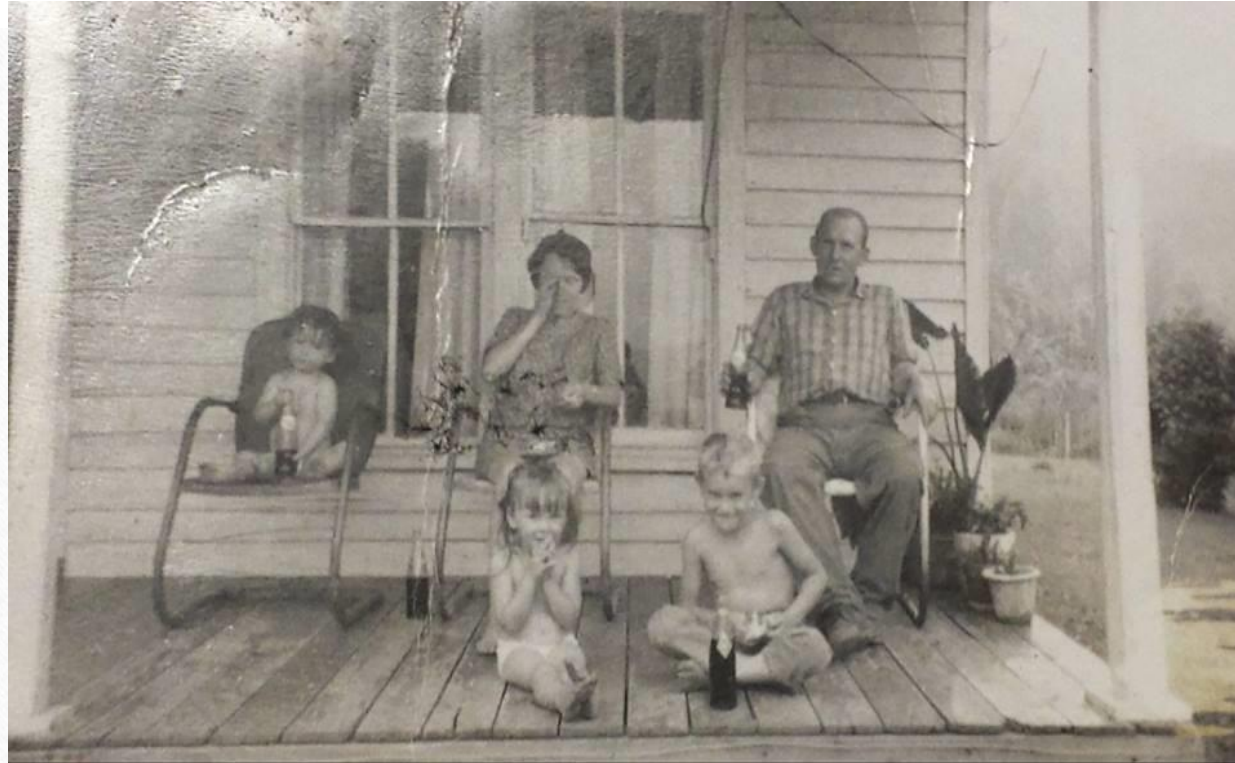
*Awakenings of  
an Appalachian Appreciation*

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*~ by Patty Watson  
of  
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Through my Appalachian foodways class, I was able to generate connections with my own family traditions and gain a better understanding of my upbringing and culture with a sense of pride and dignity.





My father and his father were both coalminers. I grew up in poverty within Southeastern Kentucky and felt very ashamed of my heritage and accent which I would attempt to hide. My family farmed, gardened, canned our own food, prepared it in cast iron skillets, and a strong work ethic trickled down from generation to generation.





My paternal grandparents accompanied my family on our homestead and farming was a substantial part of our livelihood. We dug potatoes in the early morning, hoed the garden rows, and dried apples during midday. Evenings were often filled with bean stringing between the women of our family on the front porch.

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My paternal grandfather was a Holiness preacher and often held homecoming food events following a creek-side singing and baptism. {My grandfather baptized me in a creek similar to this one when I was 13}

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My families' church homecomings involved singing, playing of the guitar and tambourine, and lots of good Appalachian food dishes to partake of. Foodways served as a community builder for all in the area.

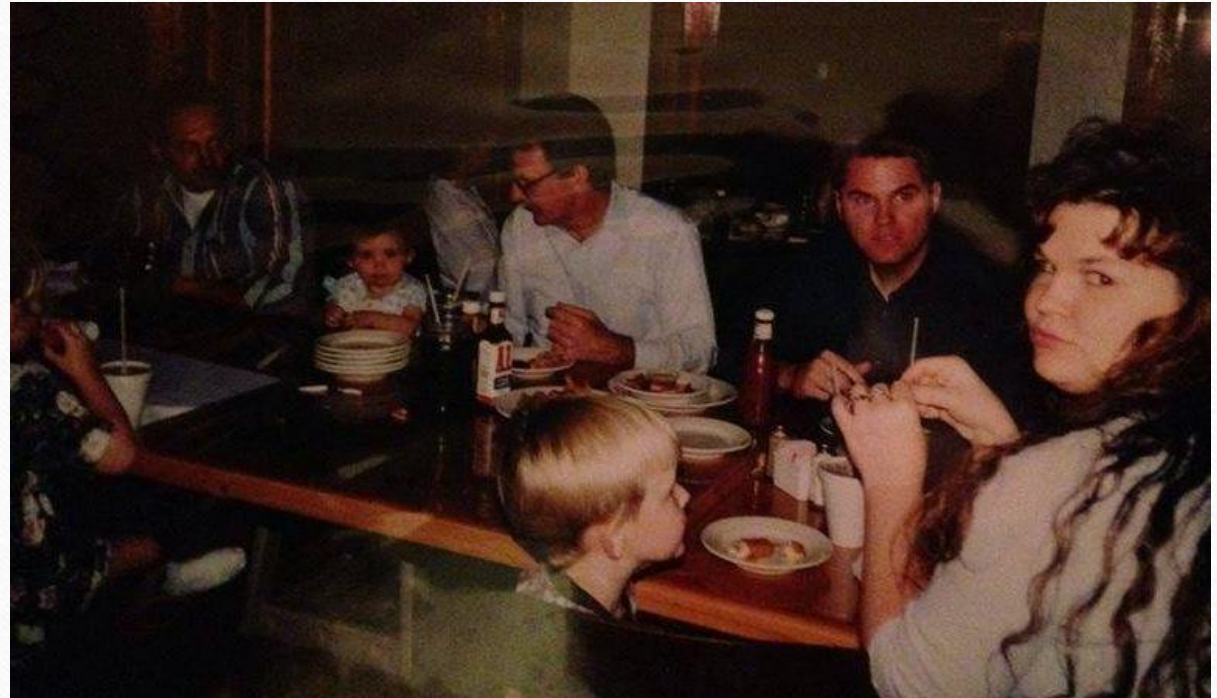
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Both of my parents came from families that raised over ten children while growing and producing their own food for self-sufficiency. The hard work ethic that they developed was engrained within us from a very young age. I was unaware at the time of the tradition being preserved with me and the importance of it.

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During my Appalachian foodways class, I began to realize the value of information that I previously thought held no substance. I began to recognize the importance of preservation of tradition and culture in the Appalachian region while instilling a sense of pride. As an adult student, I began to absorb the benefits of my tradition here in Appalachia that my young mind could not acknowledge during my youth.

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I performed tasks such as canning strawberry jam and pears, grinding fresh cornmeal, and picking greens from our class garden.





Each day was a new learning experience in our Appalachian foodways class. Information that I previously thought held little or no substance become inherently important to me. My family traditions and Appalachian heritage began to surface with pride, and I craved to learn more.

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I was able to entail the process of lard rendering for a class project which led to my reflections of our own hog processing within my family back in Whitley County, Kentucky.

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# Accepting my Appalachian Identity

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- I no longer embody shame; I am proud to tell people where I come from.
- My accent is part of my identity; I speak freely now and do not attempt to hide or distort it.
- Thanks to my Appalachian foodways class, I possess a refreshed and renewed value for my traditions while acquiring a vast amount of useful knowledge to incorporate into my studies.
- As a child, I could not have imagined that the knowledge and skills I had acquired while growing up in the countryside of Appalachia would be taught in a classroom at Berea College and studied by people all over the country today.