

## KENTUCKY BURGOO

Burgoo, Burgou or Burgout, is defined as a thick gruel or porridge used by French seamen in the eighteenth century. In Kentucky it is an entirely different dish that traces its development from the War between the States. According to tradition the command of Gen. John Hunt Morgan included a Frenchman who had a reputation with Morgan's men for being able to prepare a palatable meal from most incongruous articles. During the latter months of the war, when food was almost unobtainable, a foraging party was detailed to bring in anything that would appease hunger. In due time the detachment returned with potatoes, tomatoes, onions, some cabbage, twenty-nine blackbirds, three crows, a goose, several hens and a shoat. The entire booty was cooked in a giant powder kettle under the Frenchman's supervision.

Ravenous appetites brought shouts of applause and commendation when the men tasted the contents of the kettle. Meanwhile the Frenchman, half-apogetically, recounted the ingredients he should have had to be able to prepare a really good burgoo. One of Morgan's men made a memorandum of the formula, and brought it back home after the war. In time various versions of the recipe were used in the Bluegrass country, and the burgoo party slowly encroached on the barbecue as a popular mass-feeding commodity. However, it was not until a decade after the World War that Kentucky Burgoo forged to the front to gain nation-wide publicity.

In November, 1929, at the second of Col. E. R. Bradley's one-day charity race meetings at Idle Hour Farm, the Colonel, well-nigh frozen, as everybody else was, walked over to the burgoo booth.

"Is this tuff hot?" he asked.

"Yes sir," said James T. Looney, a groceryman of Lexington, who had prepared it.

The Colonel ate.

"This is fine," he said. "To whom am I indebted?"

"To me," Mr. Looney answered.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Looney," said the Colonel as he shook hands. This Burgoo hits the spot. You, I think, are the Burgoo King. I'll name a horse after you. Maybe he'll win the Derby."

The fame of Looney's burgoo grew. At each of the succeeding Idle Hour race meetings he was on hand to serve his steaming Burgoo, for usually the weather was damp and cold. In 1931 forty coke-burning stoves were located over the grounds and each of these was hugged by its quota of the Colonel's guests. At this "chumming party," as it was called, Mr. Looney served 900 gallons of burgoo to "a never diminishing line of customers."

Colonel Bradley kept his promise to name a colt for Mr. Looney. He chose the bay son of Bubbling Over, dam Minnowand, foaled in 1930, to bear the name Burgoo King. Mr. Looney was fortunate enough to have \$50 on him in the winter book at 40 to 1 to win the Kentucky Derby in 1932 and a week after he cashed that bet he won another on his namesake when Burgoo King won the Preakness.

Mr. Looney has made public his recipe, showing quantities sufficient for 5,000 people. He withheld the identities and amounts of certain condiments he uses as seasoning:

800 pounds of soup meat  
4 doz. squirrels, if in season  
24 gallons of canned corn  
4 bushels of onions  
240 pounds of fat hens or roosters  
15 bushels of Irish potatoes  
60 gallons of canned tomatoes  
6 gallons of tomato puree  
200 pounds of cabbage  
4 gallons of canned carrots or 2 bushels of raw  
carrots Burgoo seasoning, consisting of salt and red pepper  
pods.

Source: The Courier-Journal  
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