



Farmington Hunt following their hounds

THE HUNT BREAKFAST

by
Jane Porter Fogleman
Photos by Hay Hardy



Mrs. Bessie Carter of Redlands (right) prepared a sumptuous breakfast for the Hunt before Christmas.

Foxhunting is a tradition-bound sport that has endured for hundreds of years. One aspect of the sport that has continued in various forms is that of the Hunt Breakfast. The Hunt Breakfast originated in the time of William the Conqueror. After a long and arduous day of following the hounds after prey, all participants including the hounds would retire

to the castle's "great hall." There, a vast meal and flagons of wine would be enjoyed by all. Raucous hunting songs would be sung and the hounds would curl up exhausted under the table and wait for fallen bits of food to munch on. The day's celebration ran well into the evening hours.

That tradition continued in various



Farmington Hunt members at Redlands Hunt Breakfast

Dahon Beeney, huntsman for Farmington Hunt, with his hounds



forms for generations of hunting in England. Today the English and Irish Hunts often meet in the village square after the hunt, usually around lunchtime, where a flagon of port is passed around with tidbits of food like biscuits or sweets. When the breakfast comes before the meet, participants may gather in the local pub for a Dutch treat breakfast. They then mount their horses, and the hounds are led to the first covert. When the hunt meets at a “manor home,” there is still the occasional Hunt Breakfast with great display, but it is generally put on by the host of the manor as a supper after the hunt.

The Hunt Breakfast came across the Atlantic to the United States with the colonials and continued in much the same manner as during William the Conqueror’s time. In its present form, the Hunt Breakfast is a total misnomer as the meal is served more as a lunch though the content may and can be that of a breakfast nature. These sumptuous “breakfasts” are not furnished after every hunt but usually at the generosity of the landowner over whose land the hunt has ridden that morning. There will always be a large breakfast put on by the host Hunt when another Hunt comes to visit and enjoy good sport. This is the time for everyone to get to know each other better, brag on their hounds and horses, and rehash the day in pursuit of the fox.

The “meet” is where the horses and hounds gather for the Hunt. The hounds move off sometime between 10 am and 1 pm depending on the weather and the ground conditions. The hunt usually goes on for several hours. Upon returning, the first responsibility of the hunters is to the horses and hounds. The Hunt staff puts the hounds on the hound truck or trailer to relax. The horses are cleaned up and put on the vans with their hay bags and rugs. Then breakfast convenes. There are generally others attending the breakfast besides the actual hunters. The meal is always of a hearty nature, like stew of beef



Farmington Hunt at Redlands (Photo by Andy Clark)

or venison, sausage casseroles, fried apples, corn bread or spoon bread, salad, hot cider, cakes and cookies, and “hot todies.” There is a great deal of revelry after several hours in the saddle, but it is always with an air of festivity with people sitting on the porch or on the stairs. It is not a formal atmosphere, and everyone relaxes and appreciates the food and good company.

Of course by the time you have partaken of the breakfast and enjoyed the camaraderie of your fellow hunters, rehashed the day’s hunt, and gotten your horse home and cleaned, it is time for supper. But all in all, it is not a bad way to spend a fall day in Virginia.

Today many Hunts throughout Virginia have a spin-off of the Hunt Breakfast for those days when there is no breakfast scheduled. They have a tailgate type of affair after each hunt, which may consist of sandwiches, cheese and crackers, warm banana bread, chicken soup or whatever happens to be brought to the hunt by the members. This is the time when the participants are able to talk about the day’s hunt and relive the hound work, the high points of the day, and the flight of

Reynard. This type of Hunt Breakfast serves to make the hunting members more cohesive and appreciative of the hounds and hunting.

Whether held in the lovely dining room of one of Virginia’s grand old homes like Redlands, in the machine shed of a farm, or at a table beside the horse vans, these Hunt Breakfasts of today are a cohesive fabric of the Hunt Clubs. They serve to bring landowners and fellow hunters to a conversation and appreciation of one another’s objectives for sport and land in Virginia.

Three Hunt Breakfast recipes:

Redlands Venison Stew with Leeks

1 good venison ham, which feeds about 12-14

About 3/4 cup flour (I used soy flour in the recipe, and it gives it just a little nutty flavor.)

Salt and pepper as needed

Bacon drippings or 1/4 lb of butter

8 leeks cut in 2-inch sections

1 cup beef broth

1/2 cup heavy cream

1 clove garlic

1 teaspoon dried basil

1 1/4 cups sherry

First, marinate the venison in aged red wine overnight. Remove and discard the wine. Cut the fat away from the venison and cut the meat into 1/2- or 3/4-inch cubes.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Place the venison cubes in a bag with flour and salt and pepper to taste. Brown the meat in the drippings or butter; remove from the pan and set aside. Put leeks in a casserole dish with basil, beef broth, and garlic. Bake in the oven for one hour.

Add the sherry and cream to the meat and toss in casserole pan with the leeks. Bake for an additional hour.

Fried Apples

10-20 tart apples (Albemarle Pippin or Granny Smith work best, peeled or not)

Brown sugar

Cinnamon and nutmeg

Cut up apples in a frying pan with butter and water. Bring to boil, cover, let cook 10 minutes or so. Then add brown sugar and cinnamon and nutmeg to taste. Cover

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Redlands, c. 1798 was a 9350 acre landgrant to John Carter, son of Robert "King" Carter near Monticello. (Photo by Andy Clark)

again and keep adding water as needed. Cook until tender. Season as you desire. Serve with sausage casserole.

Redlands Batter Bread

- 1 cup corn meal
 - 2 cups boiling water
 - 3 tablespoons butter
 - 1 cup milk
 - 3 eggs
 - 1 teaspoon double-acting baking powder
 - 1 teaspoon salt
- Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Pour boiling water over corn meal. Add cup of milk. Add eggs beaten stiffly, baking powder and salt. Add melted butter. Spray casserole with cooking spray and pour mixture into casserole. Cook 30 minutes or until top is brown and crusty. This serves 4-6, so multiply for a crowd.



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Jane Porter Fogleman is a lifelong fox-hunter. She was born and raised in Charlottesville and lives there today where she hunts with Farmington Hunt Club.