

## Distributing Pork During a Pandemic

*Getting food from the farm to a consumer's table looks a little different for some during the Coronavirus outbreak; this short vignette is part of our "Virginia Food Systems and COVID-19 Story Collection Project" that aims to highlight, collect, and share stories of hope and resilience in our food system amidst the pandemic. Find out more about this project and view our entire series on [our website](#).*

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By Hunter Hilbert

VT Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation

For one Shenandoah Valley Farmer, continuing his passion and livelihood recently became more difficult—thanks to the Coronavirus pandemic in the United States. Steve Baker of The Baker Family Farm in Mount Jackson has been raising pigs since he was eight years old. Baker took a liking to raising pigs at a young age through Extension's 4-H program—following the example of earlier generations of the Baker family who had been raising pigs on the same parcel of land for over a century. The Baker Family Farm is also recognized as a Virginia Century Farm.

With a regular production and distribution routine already long in place, everything took a turn when the pandemic hit, as processing plants were forced to close down. "There's so much stress and anxiety out here right now," Baker said in response to the lack of available



*Baker's roadside farm sign with its Virginia Century Farm recognition (left). Steve poses with hogs in a photo from days past (right). Photos courtesy of WJLA.*

processors for pork-based products (Korff, 2020). Despite the stress, Baker decided to get creative. With 700 pigs, the Bakers can process their own pork. However, one of the Bakers' most common outlets for their pork is farmers' markets. With stay-at-home orders in place, many farmers' markets were also shuttered.

To continue providing for his regular customers, Baker utilized a website to take orders for pork online. Once orders were placed and filled, Baker himself drove hours at a time around Northern Virginia to meet his customers in prearranged locations. With circumstances being slightly different now, Baker found himself "working more to sell the same amount of pork" (Korff, 2020).

Baker realizes that these times are "challenging" and "scary" to endure. However, Baker says he has to "be brave" because "people have got to eat". He, along with many others, hopes for "better days ahead" (Korff, 2020).

With such a spirit of continuation and resilience, Baker seemed to make the most of providing for consumers during the most challenging of times. To learn more about The Baker Family Farm, [visit their Facebook page](#). For more information about Extension's 4-H, [visit their website](#). Learn about the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Century Farm program [here](#). This short vignette was adapted from an original WJLA piece from May 7, 2020.



*Above, Baker poses with the product of his toil (left); his operation's hogs are also shown (right). Photos courtesy of WJLA.*

## References

Korff, J. (2020, May 7). *Parking lot pork: Closed farmers markets force local pig farmer to think outside the box*. Retrieved from: [https://wjla.com/news/local/parking-lot-pork-closed-farmers-markets-force-local-pig-farmer-to-think-outside-the-box?fbclid=IwAR3YqGPmrglbBd1dwup9aZL68FdT86y3Rn0uJ\\_WAy2Y6MIoUOfcDvISldDw](https://wjla.com/news/local/parking-lot-pork-closed-farmers-markets-force-local-pig-farmer-to-think-outside-the-box?fbclid=IwAR3YqGPmrglbBd1dwup9aZL68FdT86y3Rn0uJ_WAy2Y6MIoUOfcDvISldDw)