

McLeod County **Chronicle**

Have you had your Winsted bologna?

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Every community has an identity. For some, a communal uniqueness is art; for others, it's history. Some towns are known for their athletics, and others are known for the famous figures that were born there.

There's scarcely a town in McLeod County that doesn't have some communal identity – Brownnton and Plato have baseball, Hutchinson has Les Kouba and Lindsey Whalen, Silver Lake has its Czechs, Glencoe had its Green Giant, and Stewart had its Red Owl.

When it comes to Winsted, most thoughts automatically go to the big country music festival, Winstock, but it wasn't always that way. Long ago, the charming little town on the lake was known for the delicacy made in its little meat market – bologna.

Back in the early 20th century, you might have heard the old saying, "Have you had your Winsted bologna today?" From the end of the 19th century until 1970, Winsted bologna was a household name. Winsted bologna was a staple on the dinner table across McLeod County and throughout much of the upper Midwest.

The story of the famous bologna began sometime in the nineteenth century when the Rauschendorfers, an immigrant family, settled in Jordan. While most immigrant families moved to the United States with only their meager belongings, the Rauschendorfers

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Rauschendorfers' business and moved it to Winsted.

Around 1900, Godrey's son Johannes (John) Roufs took over the business. In 1905, John built a new building on Winsted's main drag – a two-story brick building that would become the home of Winsted's City Meat Market. In no time at all, Rouf's bologna became a hit.

Word spread quickly across the upper Midwest that John Roufs made the best bologna in the region. The bologna was mailed throughout the United States to customers who couldn't get enough of the local delicacy. The meat was so sought after that other butchers attempted to duplicate the recipe. Yet, no one could pin down the exact ingredients.

While the bologna made its way around the region, it was the people of Winsted who could really appreciate just how great it was. Those stopping at the meat market, especially the kids, were often treated to a free "hunk" of Rouf's bologna.

In 1964, the Roufs era of Winsted bologna came to an end when the family sold the meat market to John and Charlene Lueck. The Luecks only ran the meat market for a few years but made enough bologna to last a lifetime. For \$3, a patron could buy two rings of the meat, and for an additional 75 cents, the rings could be shipped to your home.

The 1970s brought an unwanted change to meat markets across the nation. Federal codes were brought up to date, and many meat markets found closing their doors easier than upgrading their equipment. In 1972, Winsted's City Meat Market closed its doors, and the bologna ceased to exist.

In 2007, a Howard Lake butcher bought the recipe and began making the bologna once again.

As far as "Winsted Bologna" goes, the term and the delicacy remain a part of history.

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