MODERN MARVELS: THE BUTCHER

A mainstay in food production, whether at the corner shop or in a huge packing plant, butchers play an essential role in the production of food. This episode of Modern Marvels traces the evolution from yesteryear’s butcher-on-every-corner to today’s industrial "disassembly" lines. This episode describes the transformation of the meat industry from the days when each neighborhood seemed to have butcher to today’s meat processing plants. Follow along as historians trace the trade of the butcher, describing the ways the preparation of meat was once a highly skilled and independent aspect of the food process. Today, meat production tends to take place in large factories and on assembly lines. Despite the transformation of the meat industry, this program also tells the story of an artisan butcher who provides customers with hand-picked meats. Viewers will also hear insights from historians and first-person interviews from butchers, who describe their work and significance over time.

CURRICULUM LINKS
The Butcher would be useful for classes on American History, American Culture, Science and Technology, Marketing and Economics. It is appropriate for middle school and high school students.

VOCABULARY
Ask students to define the terms below, or to make their own list of important vocabulary words as they are watching this program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protein</th>
<th>Smelt</th>
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<tr>
<td>Expedient</td>
<td>Cutlery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Embalmed</td>
<td>Inedible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carcass</td>
<td>Differentiate</td>
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<td>Marbled</td>
<td>Fragmentary</td>
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Butchering has been around as long as humans have been carnivores. How did the invention of metal tools influence and change butchering?
2. During the Middle Ages in Europe, butchers were confined to certain areas. Why?
3. Knives are the tools of the butcher’s trade. What are the different types of knives butchers use?
5. Butchering and meat selling were local industries until the invention of the refrigerated truck. How did the refrigerated truck change the meat industry from a local industry to a national industry?
6. Butchers were some of the most skilled workers in history. How did the rise of corporations and huge meat processing plants in the 20th century change workers’ skills?
7. Steel is the preferred metal for knives because of its strength and flexibility. What gives steel its flexibility?
8. Butchers use band saws to cut through bones. How did the band change the profession? How did butchers cut through bone before the invention of the band saw?
9. Butchering is a dangerous job. What are some of the dangers? How do butchers today minimize these dangers?
10. What is a by-product? What are some of the by-products of meat processing?
11. Discuss the threat of e-coli to the nation’s meat supply.
12. How have artisan butchers reclaimed the trade of the butcher? Do you think these kinds of meat production will continue to be popular?

**EXTENDED ACTIVITIES**

1. What is the healthiest way of eating? What do our bodies need for optimum health and peak performance? Follow this link (http://www.mypyramid.gov/kids/index.html) to the US Department of Agriculture’s nutritional guideline website. Here students can find activities related to learning about nutrition. They can even play MyPyramid Blast Off Game, an interactive computer game where kids can reach Planet Power by fueling their rocket with food and physical activity. “Fuel” tanks for each food group help students keep track of how their choices fit into MyPyramid.
2. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration provides numerous activities for students for children, teens and educators. You can access these activities at http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/educate.html.

**PRIMARY RESOURCES**

*The Jungle.* Follow this link (http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5727) to the History Matters website for an excerpt from Upton Sinclair’s famous muckraking novel.

**WEBSITES**

U.S. Food and Drug Administration http://www.fda.gov/

The Chicago Historical Society: The Stockyards
http://www.chicagohs.org/history/stock.html

What’s Cooking America: History of Hamburgers:
http://whatscookingamerica.net/History/HamburgerHistory.htm

The Chicago Stockyards on the Eve of the CIO:
http://www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/stkyards.htm

**FURTHER READING**


