

Our Barbecue

by Claude Slocum

Finally, it was the day of our long awaited barbecue. Today was the day.

My wife, my daughter and I were up early taking care of last minute details. We didn't want anything to go wrong. We checked glasses, plates, utensils, and assorted paper products. The main table was prepared with a new table cloth and a homemade flower arrangement was placed in the center. This was the kind of tablecloth most of us have seen. It was red and white checkered and with the flowers in the center the setting could remind most of us of a small neighborhood restaurant.

Wow, I never knew there were so many things to go wrong in one day. As the people started to arrive, I began to wonder if anything was going to spoil this day. We had invited about 30 friends and relatives, but by 12:30 there were nearly 60 people on our deck and in our back yard. Everyone seemed to have shown up with larger families than we had planned on. They brought friends and relatives that we did not know. Right away, we knew we would be short of food.

Furthermore, it was expected to be a perfect sunny day with moderate temperature. It rained! The temperature dropped and the wind began to blow.

Still, we didn't worry; we had a tarp ready just in case. This was a special tarp that we had rented just in case we needed it. It was red and white striped to match the tablecloth. It looked like a circus tent and you could just feel that a good time would be had by all. Can you imagine my surprise when my brother and I started to put up the tarp and the ladder broke? Yes, you guessed it, the tarp was full of holes. We put it up anyway.

But, more important than the tarp was Aunt Betty and her famous maple syrup baked beans. She was on her way from Vermont when her car developed a radiator problem somewhere near Albany. She called and said she would be late. We had no baked beans.

I started the grill and began cooking burgers and hot dogs, while my wife put a tape on the tape player. We were determined that this was going to be a fun day. At the same time as the grill decided to run out of gas, the tape player (wet of course) caused a fuse to blow. We now had no electricity. Still, we thought we could save the day.

We thought we could forget the burgers and hot dogs. We would just finish the salads and snacks and the keg of beer. Also there were two bottles of expensive wine and plenty of soda pop for the children.

Did you ever see a keg of beer on ice in a large galvanized tub with chunks of ice glistening? This is what I expected to see as I approached the tub with everyone's favorite imported beer - Molsen's Golden. But, this was not the case. Uncle Charlie was upset and complaining about the beer. It appeared that the tub had gotten a hole in it and the ice had leaked out. Here was a large keg of everyone's favorite beer and it was warm.

During a brief period of sunshine, a couple of boys were playing catch with a baseball and somehow it ended up on the porch and both bottles of wine were broken.

In the meantime, I was saying goodbye to my guests because by now they had all decided to leave.

Next, I noticed that my Aunt Betty was just coming up the driveway with a large pan of her famous beans. As I was walking down the porch steps to meet her, a sudden gust of wind tore the tarp off my porch and landed on poor Aunt Betty. The beans went everywhere.

I had to admit it; my day was ruined. My wife ran into the house looking like she was about to have a nervous breakdown. My Aunt Betty ran into the bathroom, crying, and mumbling something about a brand new dress. I remember seeing Aunt Betty's dress as she ran by the picnic table. It was a light peach color and would have looked beautiful if it wasn't covered with sticky brown beans. And here I am, sitting on the back porch in the pouring rain, drinking warm beer all by myself.

At last, this day was finally over; the end. Oh, by the way, how was your last barbecue?