

5-6-98

MY PIG

My friend, Estelle Woodson, has a farm in Amelia County where she raises pigs. After she slaughtered her pigs in the fall, she frequently brought us some of her delicious sausage and lean pork chops. I asked her if she would sell us an entire pig. I remembered that my sister, Ruth, who is a wonderful manager, had told me some years earlier about how she bought and froze half a beef every year. With her growing family of six children, several of them teenagers at the time, she could easily use large amounts of meat. If Ruth could handle half a cow, I reasoned, surely I could make good use of a smaller animal like a pig.



Estelle finally agreed to sell us one of her pigs; she had it butchered to our specifications and made sausage from the parts we didn't want. I remembered how much I had enjoyed brains and eggs when I was a child and asked her to save the head for me. Looking back, I believe she was politely amused but she didn't enlighten me.

I found the amount of one hundred pounds of pork almost overwhelming when we picked it up and was dumbfounded by the head, containing the desired brains. The skull was big and unbelievably thick. How to get the brains out? Before I had a chance to try to saw the huge bone apart to salvage the brains, we had a party at our house. While talking to a friend that evening, I mentioned my anticipation of preparing and eating the brains with eggs and invited him to join us for breakfast. He obviously had been a farm boy, for he exploded into laughter, finally telling me that one pig brain was no more than a thimbleful. He declined my invitation, taunting me that I couldn't get any kind of a dish from one brain. What kind of brains did I remember from my childhood, I wondered? Obviously, I hadn't consumed *pork* brains; it must have been calf brains.

We did open up that skull, and our friend was right. The poor animal didn't have much brain at all, maybe more than a thimbleful, but far from the amount I expected. Now I can't help wondering how Babe, the movie pig, was so smart and charming with so little brain to work with. Perhaps size doesn't count.

We very much enjoyed our pork chops, roasts, and sausage, although a hundred pounds of pork is a formidable amount of meat for two persons to eat. I never see my ex-farm-boy friend that he doesn't recall gleefully my city-girl ignorance about the brain capacity of pigs. I've never again taken on such a large quantity of any animal, even though doing so once did contribute to my education in the anatomy of a pig.