



Kentucky Burgoo

Narrated by Stanley Woodward

1. Saint Mary Magdalene parish annual picnic (03:11)

<Video opens with shots from Saint Mary Magdalene's parish>

J. Egerton: This is the community of Sorgho in Daviess County, Kentucky, St. Mary Magdalene's parish. They built a barbecue pit here that's almost as long as a football field. They built it...and the people come, by the thousands.

<Video shows food being prepared for the picnic and John Egerton>

J. Egerton: They're cooking tons of barbecue on these pits. Hundreds of gallons of stew in big, black cast iron pots. This is the most amazing thing of all: the Saint Mary Magdalene picnic is just one of over twenty such big, spectacular barbecue events every summer in Daviess County alone. In a little while, they'll start serving all this food and in just three hours it'll all be gone. A thousand barbecue dinners, mountains of take home mutton, chicken and pork...and hundreds of gallons of their rich, hearty stew called "burgoo."

<A fast paced fiddle tune plays while shots of food being prepared are shown>

<Video shows John Egerton standing across from a pot of burgoo>

J. Egerton: Round these parts, they've been cooking burgoo for so long, nobodies left to remembers when it got started or how it got started or where the name comes from. You can be sure of this though. It's been going on in Daviess County since early in the 19th century. Burgoo is a close country cousin to other southern stews, hashes, muddles, bogs, and soups that you'll find burbling in big black pots from here all the way to the eastern seaboard.

<Video shows John Egerton walking into an enclosure>

J. Egerton: The [pits and the meat] are wonderful of course, but it's what's going in these pots that really starts my taste buds rolling. Burgoo is distinctive for a lot of reasons. The most important one is the main meat in here is mutton or mature sheep and

it gives it a sort of a rich, gamy, earthy flavor that's reminiscent of the great old hunter stews of ancient times.

<Video shows John Egerton with a dipper full of burgoo>

J. Egerton: Reach down and get yourself a dipper full of this. It'll take you all the way back to the Jamestown Colony and to the introduction of hearty stews cooked in big, iron pots all over the south.

2. International Burgoo Cookoff (02:13)

<Video shows different stews before showing a woman in front of a fire>

Woman: ...deer, and groundhog, squirrel, turtle, you just name it. We eat anything in Webster County. *<She laughs>*

<Video shows a burgoo judge>

Male Judge: Burgoo!

<Video shows a female judge>

Female Judge: This is the first time that I've ever tasted burgoo.

<Video shows the female judge trying a stew>

S. Woodward: What-what-whatcha reckon' that was?

Female Judge: *<She laughs>* I don't-I wonder if they're old pets. You know. Maybe they're pets unaccounted for. *<She laughs>* I don't want to think about it.

<Video shows a burgoo chef>

Bear Camp Chef: Well I started makin' this stew up here on the Elk River, when we're up here bear hunting. That's what we start on Saturday night, cooked it through Sunday for supper. Nothin' else to do so we set and cooked.

<Video shows the M.C.>

M.C.: Ladies and gentlemen, if you'll come to the front of the pavilion we're going to announce the winners of the burgoo stew.

<Video shows a man>

S. Woodward: Which one did you like the best?

Man: I liked the bear camp stew my-best of all of'em.

<Video shows the Bear Camp Burgoo Stew recipe as another man talks>

Man 2: It's spicy, but it didn't seem to be too spicy. Of course I like spicy foods or hot foods and meat seemed to be real good, tender. Uh, easy to chew.

<Video shows the Bear Camp chef again>

S. Woodward: Where'd you get your recipe?

Bear Camp Chef: I just made it up when I work up here at-had my bear camp. That's what I cook every year on Sunday.

S. Woodward: At where?

Bear Camp Chef: At my bear camp. When I'm huntin' up there in bear season.

S. Woodward: You pretty good at gettin' bear in these parts?

Bear Camp Chef: I like to chase'em. I do more chasin' than gettin'em.

<Video shows a couple of men standing by a pickup truck>

S. Woodward: Tell me about burgoo. What is it?

Man 3: What is burgoo? *<He laughs>* It used to be a minin' town. It used to be a pretty popular place.

<Video shows a woman>

Woman 2: Well Burgoo is a community just about six miles up the river.

<Video shows Mary Margaret Sommerville>

M. M. Sommerville: Story is that a group of hunters were out hunting and when they came back to camp and it's-there is a small community north of [Webster] Springs that is called Bergoo. B-e-r-g-o-o. And when they came back to camp, they just threw everything in the pot and therefore it became-instead of calling it a stew, they called it burgoo.

3. More on the parish picnic (03:37)

<Video opens with shots from the St. Mary Magdalene Parish Picnic before showing John Egerton>

<A bluegrass tune plays while no one is speaking>

J. Egerton: They say that around here that, more mutton is consumed in Daviess County, Kentucky than in all the rest of the United States put together. I'd go a little bit further and say there's probably more mutton eaten in Daviess County, Kentucky than any place this side of-of Beirut or uh, or uh, or uh, Cairo.

<Video shows Maurice Ebelhar>

M. Ebelhar: When I take over it's soup. When I get done it's burgoo. *<John Egerton laughs>*

<Video shows more shots from the picnic before showing Dr. Lee Dew>

L. Dew: That if some of these old pioneers, of the 1820s and 30s, could somehow be brought back into this crowd this afternoon, they would recognize the cooking method and they would recognize the flavor. And they'd say, "Oh by golly, we have sure missed that." *<Stanley Woodward laughs>* Whatever direction they went when they departed from here.

<Video shows more shots from the picnic before showing Dr. Lee Dew again>

L. Dew: Any Western Kentuckian that comes to this picnic and partakes of this food, is, for this hour and a half or so, a honorary member of this parish and a certainly a mutton glutton of-in good standing, uh, in Western Kentucky.

<Video alternates between shots of Dr. Lee Dew and the picnic>

L. Dew: This is the place to be. There's activities for the kids. There's a chance to meet old friends. I've seen several office holders and one or two would-be office holders here.

<Video alternates between showing a picnic worker and a dunk tank>

Worker: He's the Daviess County judge and they're dunkin' him in the water, throwin' balls at him. The judge has his gavel too, see? Oh, there we go!

<Video shows Jimmy Biddle>

J. Biddle: I think burgoo originally started with the old hunters and the old trappers, or trappers in Virginia, back in the sixteen, seventeen hundreds. They came through the Cumberland Gap and came into Kentucky and Tennessee and for some reason, this area picked up with all the sheep. Used to be a lot of sheep that went out of here. And sheep and Germans just got to mixin' together and they makin' the burgoo.

<Video alternates between shots of Dr. Lee Dew and the picnic>

L. Dew: The ancient food traditions, the-the traditions that go back beyond recorded history, uh in this county, in this town, are preserved. They are preserved in events like this. I think it's as important as the rivets that hold a bridge together. I think this is the-this is the glue. The identification of an extended family here. It's a representation of what makes us, us. The food fulfills an intimate need within us, like it's a part of our

soul. I think it's safe to say this is a soul food. It has a...a deeper, almost spiritual meaning to participate in this historical event.

4. Origins of Burgoo (01:44)

<Video opens with Jay Williams>

J. Williams: Well I think we'd better head out to Burgoo.

<Video shows shots of the Bergoo River and Bergoo Baptist Church>

<A bluegrass songs plays>

<When [????] on heaven [????]

I whisper your name along

Along my way back [darlin']

As the midnight storm rolls on>

<Video shows Jay Williams and then begins to alternate with pictures (presumably from "Tale of the Elk")>

S. Woodward: Whatcha got?

J. Williams: This is a book called "Tale of the Elk." And it was written by a fellow who fished up and down these rivers in West Virginia, all the rivers in this whole area. And he says here, "Some years ago, having been struck with the peculiarity of the name burgoo, I inquired as to its origin and was told that in the early history of that section of the country, a large party of hunters had camped at the mouth of the creek for several weeks in the height of the game season and had killed a bear, deer, turkey, pheasant, squirrels, and caught fish in great abundance. And it occurred to the one who was cook for a certain day that he would vary the menu. So he proceeded to chop up goodly portions of bear meat, venison, turkey, pheasants, squirrels, fish, and so on for his stew and by way of adding zest and flavor to the mess, as it simmered in the pot, occasional dashes of applejack. It is said that the whole posse comitatus pronounced the meal by far the best they'd had on the trip. And with one acclaim, they named the place "Camp Bergoo." And when the camp disappeared the name clung to the creek.