



GREAT BEND TRIBUNE  
2012 FOREST AVE. | P.O. BOX 228  
GREAT BEND, KS 67530  
620-792-1211 | EMAIL@GBTRIBUNE.COM

## About Us

[Subscribe](#)  
[News in Edu.](#)  
[Coupons](#)  
[Recipes](#)  
[Jobs](#)  
[Contact Us](#)

## News

[Top Story](#)  
[Local News](#)  
[Photo Reprints](#)  
[Download Paper](#)  
[Breaking News](#)  
[News Forms](#)

## Sports

[Sports Headline](#)  
[Sports News](#)

## Advertising

[Classifieds](#)  
[Place a Classified Ad](#)  
[Place a Display Ad](#)

## Local Life

[Anniversaries](#)  
[Birthdays](#)  
[Births](#)  
[Engagements](#)  
[Weddings](#)  
[Obituaries](#)  
[Opinions](#)  
[Hotel Reservations](#)

## Features

[Home Buyer's Guide](#)  
[Business Journal](#)  
[El Heraldo](#)  
[Health Care Directory](#)  
[Features List](#)

## Quick Links

[Education in Kansas](#)  
[Barton County](#)  
[Barton County Public Notices](#)  
[C. K. M. C.](#)  
[Chamber of Commerce](#)  
[Cheyenne Bottoms](#)  
[Visit Great Bend](#)  
[National Scenic Byways](#)  
[Clara Barton Hospital](#)

## Local News Photo



COURTESY PHOTO

Volunteers, shrouded in smoke, watch over the barbecued chicken halves during a past Barton County 4-H Chicken Barbecue. Barbecuing more than 2,000 chicken halves has become an exact science for the local volunteers, which means enduring searing temperatures and grease.

## Local News

### 4-H chicken barbecue hits 50th year

By PAM MARTIN [pmartin@gbtribune.com](mailto:pmartin@gbtribune.com)

Over the past 50 years, Barton County 4-H has barbecued nearly 100,000 chickens in support of the 4-H fair.

After receiving requests from the county's beef producers, the 4-H Holding Board decided to switch to a beef barbecue next year, making this chicken barbecue special.

"It's been an interesting go. I'm glad it made 50 years," said former Barton County Extension Agent Bill VanSlike.

VanSlike was extension agent when Holding Board members were trying to find a way to encourage livestock sale buyers to attend the fair. 4-H Livestock leader Loyal Otte suggested holding a chicken fry similar to Scott County.

"About that time the poultry department (Kansas State University) was sponsoring mass chicken barbecues," VanSlike said.

He gave them a call and they agreed to come, bringing all of the equipment and sauce and charging 7 cents per serving for their expenses. Three K-State Poultry Department people showed up to direct the 4-H volunteers.

"Our job was to dig the pit," he said.

The Poultry Department sent assistance for three years, then cut the Barton County group loose.

That first year, 425 people attended the barbecue, paying \$1 per meal for a profit of \$247.28. Each year, the number of people attending increased, creeping up to 3,000. That was too many, VanSlike said, and the numbers were scaled down to the current 2,000 meals. Although this year, that number may once again creep higher.

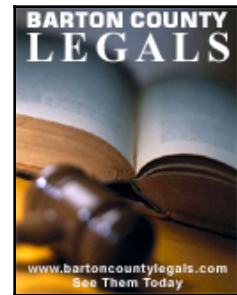
"We've sold over 2,000 tickets already," said Barton County Extension Agent Berny Unruh.

The process of barbecuing 2,400 chicken halves hasn't changed much since that original barbecue in 1957. Fencerow hedge posts are still used to fuel the fire pit, if they are available, and the "secret" recipe is still prepared.

"I don't even know the recipe," said Jeff Mauler, who is taking over the barbecue chairmanship from 17-year veteran David Leery.

The oil-and-vinegar base sauce is sprayed onto the chicken halves, which are watched carefully for flare-ups. Water hoses are on hand to take care of any hot spots, Mauler said.

## Advertising



**Golden Belt Com. Foundation**

**Great Bend**

**Great Bend CO-OP**

**Great Bend Help Wanted**

**Great Bend Public Library**

**Historical Museum**

**KS Department of Revenue**

**KS Registered Offender Search**

**Ellsworth Co. Medical Center**

Six people per pit are in charge of flipping the racks, which hold 42 chicken halves each. 4-H members place new chicken halves on empty racks, making sure to use all lefts or all right halves. Mauler estimated it takes 30 to 40 people for the operation.

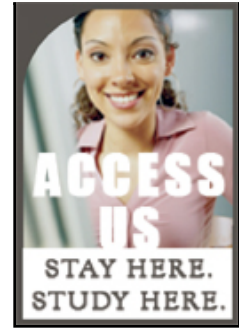
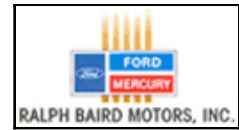
Many of the volunteers come back year after year, as evidenced by Leroy's 17-year tenure.

"I've only missed two since I was 10," Mauler said.

VanSlike has great memories and stories from many years of helping with the event.

"It's gotten to be a social thing," VanSlike said. "I guess that's what makes it go."

And it "went" 50 years, and as Mauler pointed out, chicken can always make a return engagement.



© 1997-2007 Great Bend Tribune. All rights reserved.