

## **HOMEMADE MIXTURE CALLED SWITZLE QUENCHED THIRSTS BEFORE GATORADE 08/03/99**

It's been hot. How hot? I saw a coyote chasing a rabbit and they were both walking.

Seriously, it's a condition we don't experience too often here in the Adirondacks. I started to mow my lawn and it didn't take long for me to decide it was a bad idea. It's almost too hot to fish.

I was desperate for a topic for this column and began to think of how I might purloin a few lines from the heat. Since I could think of a few things I enjoy doing when it's this hot, I began to focus on the many things I abhor. Haying is the first thing that comes to mind.

When I speak of haying, I am not referring to the modern day process where everything is done by machine. I cannot tell you how old I was when I was pressed into service, but it was at a very young age.

We had a one-horse, two-cow operation on the outskirts of a small Oswego county village run by my namesake and retired farmer Great Uncle Mart. Our prime mover was an old buckskin named "Duke." He was an old gelding workhorse that provided the power. My first job was to keep the horseflies and mosquitoes from eating him alive.

One of the fields we harvested was adjacent to a swamp and the bugs were fierce. We had a fly net that covered some of Duke's back and flanks, but there was plenty of exposed area for the flies. He would be covered with dried blood at the end of the day.

I gradually graduated up to the hands-on end of the operation, which meant the pitchfork. We threw our hay up in shocks and they were pitched onto the wagon by hand. It was hot, hard, grueling work that had to be done with a surprising amount of skill. There was a knack that one mastered that helped placed the heavy forkfuls on the wagon. It was especially true as the top of the load got higher and higher.

The person on the wagon had to know how to load it properly to keep it from falling off and to be able to unload it as well. The outsides were loaded first and the hay

in the center held it all together. It was layered in and the process reversed when it was unloaded.

We had to pitch it into the mow by hand and layer it there as well if you wanted to pitch it out easily. Layers of salt were sometimes sprinkled over the layers of hay. I am not sure if it was part of the curing process or to make it more palatable to the stock.

In those days, some farmers used tractors and the hay was raked in windrows and loaded with a loader hooked to the back of the wagon. It still required at least one man with a fork to even the load. A large fork attached to a pulley and rope that was fastened to a track in the top of the barn, moved the load up into the mow. A horse was used to lift it from the wagon and up into the peak of the barn. Men with forks in the mow tripped the hayfork and they mowed it away.

It was a far cry from today's methods where, much like the axe in the woods, forks are not needed to put the hay up. It is still hot, hard work and one thing will always be the same about it. You get really thirsty.

If you indulged in too much cold water when you were excessively hot you became violent ill with cramps, nausea and headache. The old timers had a remedy for that it was Switzle. It was made up by the women and there was always plenty of it on hand during haying.

I heard Kenny Youngs talk about Switzle the other day and he even gave a recipe out over the air during his daily radio broadcast on Boonville's WBRV.

The following ingredients make about a half-gallon: To 2 quarts of water add  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup vinegar, 1-cup sugar and  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ginger. There you have Switzle, a drink that quenched your thirst without suffering after effects.