

*Renfrew Institute*  
*for Cultural and Environmental Studies*

**FROM FIELD TO TABLE:  
PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN FOOD  
PRESERVATION AND PREPARATION**

# **Vocabulary**

**Bacteria** – one-celled microorganism that can cause illness and can cause spoilage in food. Can be destroyed by heat.

**Brine** – salt-water solution used for pickling

**Compound** – pure substance made of 2 or more elements, chemically joined, and in a fixed proportion to each other (can be gas, solid, or liquid).

**Element** – gas, liquid, or solid substance that can't be broken down into smaller parts by chemical means.

**Food preservation** – preparing food for future use by salting, drying, pickling, or candying to prevent decay or spoilage. (Growth of bacteria in food must be prevented.)

**Fermentation** – chemical reaction caused by yeast, bacterium, mold or enzyme that changes compounds to simple substances (e.g. sugar changes to carbon dioxide and vinegar to alcohol).

**Firkin** – small wooden barrel, keg, or bucket used for storing butter, cheese, or lard.

**Grains** – spelt, rye, oats, flax, wheat, barley

**Lard** – rendered fat of a hog.

**Mixture** – made of gases, liquids, or solids that aren't chemically joined and are in no fixed proportion to each other.

**Pickle** – *verb*: to preserve in solution of brine or vinegar, which stops growth of bacteria.  
*noun*: solution of brine or vinegar, often spiced, for preserving foods; and edible product, such as a cucumber, that has been preserved in pickle solution.

**Render** – to heat the fat so liquid fat melts away from fiber, leaving behind the cooked fiber which is known as cracklings or chitlins. Once cool, the fat becomes semi-solid (like butter).

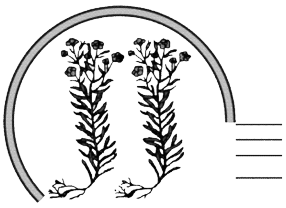
**Root Cellar** – underground storage for root crops such as carrots, potatoes, turnips, as well as items such as apples, cabbages, etc.

**Sauerkraut (sour cabbage)** – chopped or shredded cabbage which is salted and fermented in its own juices.

**Solution** – gas, liquid, or solid dispersed evenly in another gas, liquid, or solid without any chemical change.

**Treenware** – any vessel made from wood, used for eating from, or in food preparation.

**Self-sufficiency – Self Sufficient** – needing no outside help in satisfying one's basic needs, especially with regard to the production of food and clothing



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# Online Resources

## Videos

### SAUERKRAUT

*Making Fresh Sauerkraut:*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITpr3e\\_Ld3U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITpr3e_Ld3U)

Good in depth explanation. Period dress. Jas. Townsend & Sons

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORYs\\_T4liO8&t=217s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORYs_T4liO8&t=217s)

Shows the “old German art” of making sauerkraut.

*Simple Sauerkraut Soup, a delicious dish for Soldiers and Sailors Alike*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mCW5iibwh>

Shows how to use sauerkraut to make a soup. Not necessarily Pennsylvania German but definitely period.

### GRISTMILL

*George Washington’s Gristmill at Mount Vernon*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5e42LoyEtc>

Shows operation of the mill without talking.

*The Gristmill at George Washington’s Mount Vernon*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdOCZYpLgo8>

This video shows an interpreter offering a thorough explanation.

*Union Mills Grist Mill*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWg53NV5ImQ>

A mill in Carroll County, Md. Undershot wheel.

### FLAILING & WINNOWING

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-YurYAOCD4>

From a Canadian museum. Although this grain is wheat (not flax), the video presents the tools necessary for flailing, the process of threshing the grain, and shows how the grain can be used to benefit us.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdBBFMtJzDA>

A modern day couple harvests wheat using 19th-century tools along two acres of their land. This is their family business.