

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 108

By McNally

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Allan Benton for being the purveyor who preserves and continues the delicious legacy of the most sought-after bacon and hams in the country.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pay tribute to true Tennesseans who embark upon the task of keeping Appalachian traditions and culture, especially Southern cuisine, alive for present and future generations; and

WHEREAS, one such noteworthy person is Allan Benton, a country boy through and through, who is considered Tennessee's boss hog for his slow cured bacon bellies and hams that have received national acclaim; and

WHEREAS, in 1973, Mr. Benton took over a small curing and smoking operation from Albert Hicks in Madisonville, Tennessee, and having been raised on a farm, used the knowledge of his forbears to slow cure hams with an old-fashioned Benton family recipe that includes salt, brown sugar, black and red pepper, and the Benton special touch, curing the meat until he preserved a perfect taste; and

WHEREAS, committed to procuring the highest quality products and upholding the utmost ethical standards despite financial hardship, Allan Benton remained true to the wisdom he acquired from his father, the late B.D. Benton; from the onset of his business undertaking, he resolved himself to improving his product, regardless of cost, never adopting the quick curing procedure that robs the customer of the scrumptious flavor of slow-cured hams and bacon bellies; and

WHEREAS, claiming that cured pork was simply sustenance for poor, Appalachian hillbillies, Allan Benton has been proved wrong by his fan base, which includes Oprah Winfrey; President Obama and the First Lady; *Esquire* magazine, who proclaimed Benton's the "world's

best bacon”; *Gourmet’s* John T. Edge, who says Benton’s has “the most flavorful ham and bacon we’ve tasted in years”; dozens of mentions on *New York Times’s* website from reviews and food blogs, as well as on the HBO series *Treme*; and the “I Love Benton’s Bacon” Facebook page; and

WHEREAS, swearing by Benton’s pronounced smoked flavor, chefs from across the nation, including Atlanta, Chicago, Nashville, and New York, design culinary masterpieces using the delectable bacon as a salient ingredient; and

WHEREAS, rich in flavor and history, Benton’s bacon’s fame can be traced to Blackberry Farms, a 4200-acre estate in Walland, Tennessee, that is recognized for its sumptuous gourmet meals; chef John Fleer, former head of the culinary staff at Blackberry Farms, put Benton’s name on his menu and on the map, popularizing Benton’s bacon in gourmet fare; and

WHEREAS, Benton’s bacon’s success has been evidenced by it being the main ingredient in many fine cuisines such as the “Benton’s Old-Fashioned”, a cocktail that infuses bourbon and Benton’s bacon; the Benton’s Bacon Roll, a sushi delicacy at Atlanta’s One Flew South Restaurant and Sushi Bar; and in ravioli stuffed with Benton’s bacon, ricotta, lemon and mint at Germantown’s Lazzaroli’s Pasta; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the recognition he received from Blackberry Farms, Allan Benton also attributes his business success to correspondence he had with professors at universities throughout the South; he would explain to the instructors what he was trying to accomplish and ask for suggestions, taking the combination of this advice alongside wisdom from former owner Albert Hicks and his father to propel his products to the status they have achieved today; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Benton’s operation ships 5,000 to 6,000 pounds a week in bacon and 7,000 to 8,000 pounds of ham, annually totaling an impressive 14,000 hams and 25,000 to 30,000 bacon bellies; the hams come from Alabama, Georgia, and Virginia, and are “heritage” hogs, old breeds raised on pasture without antibiotics, that are spotted, brown, black or red, and root out their food instead of being fed from a trough; and

WHEREAS, despite the deceiving appearance of the humble cinderblock building in which Allan Benton's dry-curing pork operation is located, his business and products stands as a timeless testament to quality and remarkable flavor, pleasing and delighting the taste buds of local residents and out-of-towners alike, and upholding Appalachia's culture and tradition with each delectable bite; and

WHEREAS, Allan Benton has operated with expertise and integrity since the inception of his establishment, and he is wholly deserving of the formal recognition of this Body; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Allan Benton for being the producer of the nation's best bacon, applaud him for preserving and continuing the delicious heritage of deep Southern culture, and wish Mr. Benton much continued success in his future endeavors

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.