

## Pig In A Day - DVD Review

Contributed by High Green Farm

As someone who has started their own adventures with pigs in the last year, I jumped at the chance to review the River Cottage Pig in a Day DVD. So far we have relied upon the services of our local butcher to do the honours, though I have been tempted to tackle the task myself for our pork.

It is nice to review something new from the River Cottage team, as I, perhaps like others, have become somewhat disillusioned with the latest rehash of old material. However you can't escape some of the old material, as after Hugh's brief introduction is an episode from Tales from River Cottage – The Joy of Pigs. Four or so years ago, before we moved here, I watched this episode on several occasions, and dreamt of the days when I too would have pigs! How my friends laughed!

This episode actually sits quite well as a prelude to the rest, though equally it could have been edited to fit around the next chapter - Pig Keeping: A Beginners guide.

The Beginners Guide is a very basic guide of how to start in pig keeping. It should help those with no experience to setup their plot and take their first steps. Amongst other things it covers selection of land, fencing, housing, feed, slaughter and even a little on farrowing. However little or no mention was made of some of the important bits, like tagging, holding numbers or movement licences. I'm not sure if this was deliberate to prevent the passage of time making these bits obsolete, but pointing the viewer in the general direction of their local DEFRA office or the DEFRA website, might not have been a bad thing. There are a few good tips here – like setting up a small pen around their arc immediately after you get your weaners, in an effort to make them less nervous of their surroundings. But if you are after a decent lesson in pig-manship (or pig-womanship), then I'd suggest a good book will offer more than this.

But now onto, quite literally, the meat of it.

The Pig in a Day portion of the DVD is split into two sections, Butchery and then Sausages, Curing and Charcuterie. The 30 minute butchery section starts with an introduction of the tools required, together with a brief tutorial on how to sharpen your knives. Hugh and Ray then cover how to butcher half a pig, joint by joint. Each joint is a separate chapter on the DVD so it is very easy to follow. It seems to cover all of the major work required, but does omit boning out the shoulder for sausages or joints, which would have been helpful when moving onto sausages. There are definitely some helpful tips here on how to process your own meat, such as a simple knot to tie your joints with.

The final section of the DVD covers what to do with the meat that you won't be freezing or cooking fresh, but will require further preparation. Sausage and salami preparation, dry curing of bacon, an air dried ham, together with a brine cured ham are all covered in sufficient depth to give it a go yourself. Hugh and Ray discuss the use of saltpetre, and it is fairly clear which side of the use/don't use divide they come down on!

The DVD also contains details of all the recipes included in the tutorials, together with a useful selection of other filmed recipes including brawn and crispy fried brains.

All in all I think if you are considering processing your own pork, then I would say this DVD would be a good investment. Certainly it's provided me with enough confidence to go the whole hog – whether I will or not is another matter.

Many thanks to the people at River Cottage for sending us a review copy, [click here](#) for the River Cottage website. This review is being discussed on the Downsizer forum, see what others have to say by [clicking here](#).