

On Father's Day, Dad would host a big cookout for several families. The two of us would drive to the Broadway Market on the East Side, which wasn't a store but a huge ethnic food market, a collection of vendors under one roof, including some wonderful butcher shops with sawdust on the floor that offered up some of Buffalo's best food, which is saying a lot.

The variety of food at the Broadway Market was astonishing, and constituted a vegetarian's worst nightmare. The display cases showed, among other offerings, pork neck bone, smoked pork neck bone, jellied tongue, Polish bacon, slab bacon, double smoked hunter bacon, German-style wieners, Italian sausage, pork roll sausage, hot or mild beef sausage, barley sausage, beer sausage, something called "smoked butt," which I'd rather not know about, chopped ham, smoked hocks, turkey gizzards, smoked turkey parts, chicken feet, chicken liver, chicken fat, fresh oxtails, and ribs of every type. Just before Easter, people of Polish descent came in to buy butter lambs—butter in the shape of a sacrificial lamb, to which they affixed a red ribbon to symbolize the blood of Christ.

We kept it simple. Dad would buy sausages and fresh hot dogs—but only certain brands were acceptable, all locally made and strung together like the wieners in old cartoons: Malecki, Sahlen, Redlinski, Szelengowski (known as Shellies), and Wardynski. "Don't give me that bologna!" went their radio jingle. "I want Wardynski's!" It didn't rhyme, but it sounded just right.

When Dad put the hot dogs on the grill, he'd cut each one three times with "paper cuts" so the flavor would burst through.

Hot dogs are a serious food in Buffalo, especially "charred" hot dogs. In my day, just about every neighborhood had a hot dog stand, usually with a real charcoal fire that stayed lit all day. Even today, the Galleria, the city's biggest shopping mall, has an indoor charcoal hot dog stand, with huge ducts and fans to deal with the smoke. It opens at 11 A.M., and by noon the line stretches around the corner.

Before leaving the Broadway Market, we'd pick up a bottle of Weber's Horseradish Mustard (made in Buffalo!), relish, hamburgers, macaroni salad, potato salad (hey, you gotta eat!), and corn on the cob, which Mom boiled in the kitchen and we layered with plenty of butter and salt. On the way home we'd stop at the Quality Bakery for freshly baked hot dog rolls; the bland supermarket version was simply unacceptable. And no Father's Day cookout was complete without a real keg of beer for the grown-ups.