HOGS, SHEEP, AND PEANUTS are not native to Virginia. The first hogs arrived with the Jamestown settlers. Spanish traders brought South American peanuts to Africa, and enslaved Africans brought them to North America.

Without hogs, there would be no famous Virginia dry-cured, or “country,” ham. Although salted meats were known to the English settlers, legend has it that Native Americans taught them how to use smoke and salt to preserve meat. Today, gourmets favor Virginia country ham because it is similar to fine European hams.

In England, lamb is consumed more than it is in the southern United States. Native English sheep include the Romney Marsh, a hearty meat and wool producer now raised by some farmers in Virginia.

People of African descent long grew peanuts for their own consumption. After 1900, vendors at circuses and ball games made peanuts commercially successful. The Virginia-style peanut is a large, gourmet nut. Today, West African farmers grow a smaller, Spanish-style peanut.

HOG, SHEEP, AND PEANUT FACTS:

- In 1916, Virginia schoolboy Antonio Gentile sketched “Mr. Peanut,” which became the famous icon.
- In 1926, the Virginia General Assembly passed a law that allowed only the meat of peanut-fed hogs, cured and processed in the town of Smithfield, to be called “Smithfield hams.”
- The word “goober” (peanut) comes from the Kimbundu word, nguba.
- On Romney Marsh in Kent, England, shepherds were called “lookers.” A school project in New Romney is collecting sheep-farming memories and recipes for “lookers’ pie.”