

Homemade Bacon

A few people have been asking lately on times and temps for curing and smoking BACON. I guess not all of us started with BuckBoardBacon and don't have directions, so I thought (I know that's dangerous) I would make a reference post so we can point our friends to it when this question is asked again. This will be the slimmed down version from BBB and HiMountain.

Preparation and applying cure.

Best meat size should be 3 to 3 1/2 inches thick or less.

Measure the amount of cure according to the weight of meat that will be cured.(this amount should be with the directions from where you have bought the cure)Use ONLY that amount, like I said **THIS IS NOT BUTT RUB HERE**. More is not better.

Apply cure thoroughly over the meat (use it all), including any cavities, sides, or what have you. Take your time and rub it in well.

Place meat in a non-metallic pan and cover. I use a semi-throw-away plastic containers (Zip-Lock brand) I buy at WalleyWorld, the large ones fit a butt just right.

EDIT If you use Butcher-Packer Cures, here is what it brakes down to:

This is the amount I use for dry rub, you can see why folks question me about the amount. I have had no problems with this amount, the meat comes out nice and pink with that iridescent type shine to it.

Broken down, it comes to this: (please forgive me if this is elementary, I do this for all of us from Arkensaw) Also, the scale I use measures only in 1/10 of pound.

1lb .32oz or .02lb
2lb .66oz or .04125lb
3lb 1.0oz or .0625lb
5lb 1.6oz or .1lb
10lb 3.2oz or .2lb

Hay, I know that this does not come out totally exact. This is smoking and not Newton' 2nd law.

I usually measure them in 2 and 5lb baggies, with this combo I can basically fit any weight.HTH

Curing times:

Your temp of the fridge should be about 40deg. Much colder than that it might stop the curing process.

Just an note here: I have edited these temps as I was reminded by someone that the danger zones for meats by the FDA is the 40's. He also stated that he keeps his fridge between 35-38 and has had no problems with the process stopping. I know there are plenty of directions out there that state the higher temps. I believe I might try a cooler temp to see what happens.

BBB says 10 days and turning the meat half way through. If you like a bit of more intense taste, I regularly cure mine for up to 21 days and have excellent results especially if you are using a much milder type cure (maple sugar or brown sugar). During this time the meat will start giving off some fluid, depending on your meat, this could be a lot. Leave it in the container, no need to drain.

Preparation for smoking:

After it has cured rinse the meat well and let soak for two hours. This is where some of us has screwed up. Rinse the meat WELL, when you think you are done, do it again. Unless you want really salty meat skip this and you probably won't want to make bacon again. Let the meat stand at room temp for 1 hr.

Smoking times and temps:

Put meat in smoker and bring up the heat to 150deg and cook for 45 minutes **WITHOUT SMOKE**.

After 45 minutes raise the temp of the smoker 200deg and let the smoke roll.

Smoke till a internal temp of 140deg. This usually takes 2-4 hrs, depending. **AT THAT POINT** turn off the heat and let stand IN THE SMOKER for 1 hour.

A few words about internal temp. I have started smoking mine to a internal temp between 153 and 155 deg. It has been stated that Canada law say that everything (like this) must be done till a temp of 150deg. At 151 or 152 all meat is suppose to be safe to eat with out any more cooking. So with that in mind , choose your temps and cook or (re-cook)at you own liking. Listed below is a thread about the subject.http://www.bradleysmoker.com/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=322

The reason I bring this up is because when you first see your bacon it kind of looks like cured ham and you will want to eat just like that. I wanted to smoke it long enough so I can do this.

Cuts of meat:

Of course this will be a personal thing here. These are my thoughts. I started off using butts. They were fine and they do yield a great product but however, my suggestion is to go to a good meat market and choose your meat. A great cut of meat really makes a difference here. It seems when I purchase the ones in the cryovac that comes two to a package, they seem to be too marbled and fatty for my liking when it comes to bacon making. Some one on the forum here suggested to use a pork loin, so I did. I can get a whole one at Sam's for about \$20.00 and that gives me three large pieces to work with. I like the way the loin comes out, it's a lot leaner and you almost have to add a touch of oil in the pan if you are going to fry it. The bottom line is the loin is easier to handle, you don't have to de-bone it, easy to make sandwiches, cuts of about 3/8 inch make a great steak for the grill. Last but not least, I just like the flavor of a cured pork loin better. Some others use pork belly to make real looking bacon, I would like to try this some day. I would appreciate their thoughts.