

How to Smoke a Store Pork Ham

You picked the right time to try it! Just remember one important thing. A smoked fresh ham is different than the cooked (and usually smoked) ham you have probably bought at the grocery store before.

1. They are usually already fully cooked, and basically you are just reheating them when you bake them in the oven.
2. These hams at the store are usually cured. When you smoke your fresh ham, it has not been cured (of course). So there will be a different taste to your smoked ham. Some of my customers think a fresh smoked ham taste better than a cured, smoked ham. (I really think you will enjoy it though!)

I assume you've used whatever type of smoker you've got before (if not, ask me about how to use the typical home smoker sometime).

There are two basic, and necessary items to remember:

1. Make sure you have some moisture (usually in the form of steam) in your smoker when you cook your ham. Hams usually have the tendency to dry out while smoking. So make sure you add liquid to the pan in the bottom of the smoker. I've found that adding some wine or vinegar to the water (or just straight red wine or spiced vinegar) greatly improves the taste, and the tenderness, of the smoked ham. You could also use Worcestershire sauce or beer. For your first time, I suggest water with some red wine or red vinegar, and then the next time you smoke a ham you could experiment some more.
2. Don't cook too fast or too hot. If you have a way to measure the air temperature, try and keep it around 160 to 170 degrees. At this temperature range, it should take approximately 6 to 8 hours to cook to perfection (assuming the ham weighs in the range of 12 to 16 pounds, which is average). If possible, and I strongly suggest you do, get a meat thermometer to stick in the thickest part of the ham. You can tell if the ham is ready when it reaches the temperature of 160 degrees in the thickest part of the ham (That way you know the ham is done all the way through).

That's about it. Some general tips, which you may already know, but I'll include here for others who read this:

 Don't wrap the ham in aluminum foil, this prevents the smoke from penetrating the meat completely.

 Don't add salt while the ham is cooking, this will leech more of its' juices out.

 When you carve the ham, make sure you slice across the grain, which would be cutting across from the narrowest sides.

I think you'll really enjoy the taste, and it always taste better when you're "doing it yourself"!!