

Smoking Hams

I've recently learned that the process I like best is called making a city ham by RevT on the Smoke Pit forum. I always just called it wet brining a ham vs dry brining a ham. Thank you RevT for the info!

I am partial to wet brines. I am really big on injecting flavors deep into the meat. Ever take a bite of something and say WOW that's great then take the next bite toward the inner part of the meat and think well that's blah. Well you don't get that when you inject the flavors into the meat as well. Every bite will taste as good as the first!

Here's my 3 step process and the logic I use to make my brines – write everything you do down so you'll know how to make adjustments the next time you try it.

I Designing the Brine

Here's the basic brine I use for everything ... and adjust for meat being used

1 gallons of ice water
1/3 to 3/4 cups sea salt or kosher salt
1/3 to 3/4 dextrose corn sugar or brown sugar or honey

Put all salts, sugars and spices in a separate bowl - you'll be pouring boiling water in them to dissolve later.

Salt and sugar should be in pretty much in balance. I don't like things salty so depending on what it is I am brining determines the amount of salt and that determines the amount of sugar. More often than not I use 1/3 cup salt and 1/3 cup sugar.

1) Now what are we smoking? A ham in this case right?
Let's think about salts and sugars

I like ham with brown sugar or honey so use brown or honey instead of dextrose.

2) Do you like pineapple on ham? Then substitute a few cups of pineapple juice in the brine instead of the water. So you'd remove 2 cups of water and add 2 cups of pineapple juice.

3) What spices or flavors do you like with ham?
Garlic? Onion? Cloves? Dijon Mustard? Orange? Lemon? Mango? Apple? Parsley? Pepper? Maple Syrup? Cinnamon?

What ever you like on the outside should go on the inside or in the brine! I start with about 1 tablespoon for powdered spices, and 1/2 to 1 cup for liquids like fruit juices or syrups.

4) Next boil a few cups of water and pour it into your spice mix, mix it real good and dissolve all the salts and sugars - now taste it. Does it taste balanced? Need more of something? Adjust your spice blend accordingly and write it down. When your happy with the brine THEN add the cure! I always

used Prague Powder #1 per pound of meat as directed by the manufacturer. This is usually 1/4 teaspoon per pound of meat.

Prague powder #1 is cheaper to use and you don't have to adjust your recipes for salt levels like Tender Quick, which is mostly salt, and it's pink so it won't be confused with salt.

I put this ham in a plastic shoe box and used oranges to raise the water level some.

II Injecting the Brine

Once you mix it all up and get everything dissolved add it to your ice water. The water should be very cold! About 38 to 40°F. Inject your meat every 3 inches with your brine solution until it squirts back at you pulling the needle out as you apply pressure.



Throw the meat in whatever container you will be brining in and place it in the refrigerator for 4 days to 7 days. I put this ham in a plastic shoe box and used oranges to raise the water level some.

Once brined remove the meat from the refrigerator. Set the meat on a rack in the sink to dry off and leach out any extra water. This takes about an hour. Then smoke according to use.

III Smoking the Ham

Place meat in a 120°F smoker with dampers wide open and no smoke until dry to the touch.

After the surface of the meat has become completely dry smoke with wood at 120°F with dampers wide open for 8 hours.

Close the dampers to 1/2 open and smoke gradually increasing the temperature to 155°F to achieve an internal temperature of 155°F for a fully cooked ham.

Your ham will turn a nice reddish-brown color. You may now eat it or



freeze it for later.

I recommend using Hickory or pecan wood with cherry, orange or apple.