Presents...

# Salt Curing Meat in Brine



Curing meat by using a salt brine was a widely used method of preserving meat before the days of refrigeration. This is the way we cured pork in Southern Alberta, however it would work for beef as well:

Recipe by Verla Cress (born 1940)

OK - Brine barrel filled half way up with 1 cup salt per 2 gallons of hot water (that's 32 parts water - 1 part salt), and a bit of vinegar -

OR

BETTER - Brine Barrel filled 1/2 way with 5/8 cup salt & 3/8 cup curing salt per 2 gallons hot water, and a bit of vinegar.

Cut your animal up into ham sized pieces (about 10 - 15 lbs each).

Put the pieces in the brine barrel and let it soak for 6 days. Now that your meat is salted, remove the meat from the brine, dry it off and put it in flour or gunny sacks to keep the flies away. Then hang it up in a cool dry place to dry. It will keep like this for perhaps six weeks if stored in a cool place during the Summer. Of course, it will keep much longer in the Winter. If it goes bad, you'll know it!

OR... FURTHER PROCESS IT BY:

Putting it in a brine barrel, filled half way up with 4 cups brown sugar to 3 gallons water - and a bit of vinegar (note: no salt): Inject some of the sugar brine mixture into the already salted meat with a syringe, then put the meat in the sugar brine for 3 days.

Remove the meat from the brine and smoke it for 3 days. Now put your smoked meat

into flour or gunny sacks to keep the flies away and hang it up in a cool dry place to store. Smoked meat preserved like this should keep in the Summer for at least 4 months if stored in a cool dry place. It will keep much longer in the Winter, or if refrigerated.

Extract from
Leslie Basel's
rec.food.preserving
FAQs
Salt, Sugar, Sodium
Nitrite and Sodium Nitrate.

Salt and sugar both cure meat by osmosis. In addition to drawing the water from the food, they dehydrate and kill the bacteria that make food spoil. In general, though, use of the word "cure" refers to processing the meat with either sodium nitrite or sodium nitrate. Sodium nitrite and sodium nitrate are the basis for two commercially used products: Prague powders #1 and #2. Prague powder #1 is a mixture of 1 part sodium nitrite and 16 parts salt. The chemicals are combined and crystallized to assure even distribution. Even though diluted, only 4 ounces of Prague powder #1 is required to cure 100 lbs of meat. A more typical measurement for home use is 1 tsp per 5 lbs of meat. Prague powder #2 is a mixture of 1 part sodium nitrite, .64 parts sodium nitrate and 16 parts salt. It is primarily used in dry-curing.
One other commonly available curing product is Morton's Tender Quick. It is a mixture of salt, sodium nitrite, sodium nitrate and sugar. Ask your butcher or grocer to stock it for you.
[Where can these compounds be obtained?]
If you are chummy with a local butcher who does curing, maybe (s)he will sell you a small quantity. Otherwise, the Sausage Maker offers all items mentioned here. The Sausage Maker Inc./ 26 Military Road/

Buffalo NY 14207. (716)-876-5521.


More Detailed Instructions:

This recipe was taken from a tiny home-made recipe book, "Remember Mama's Recipes." It was put together by the women of the Stirling, Alberta, LDS congregation back in the 1950's.

Brine Cured Pork

100 lbs pork
8 lbs salt (Note: 1 part salt to 48 parts water)
2 oz. salt peter
2 lbs brown sugar
5 gallons water

Method:

Mix salt, brown sugar and salt peter, add this to the water and bring the mixture to a boil. Stir to dissolve sugar. Skim off any scum that may form while boiling after everything is dissolved. Remove from heat and chill until quite cold.

Pack the pieces of meat into clean barrels or earthenware crocks, placing them as close together as possible. Now pour the cold brine over the meat making absolute certain the meat is completely covered. Put a board over the meat that just fits inside the container and place weights on it to make sure that the meat is emerged in the brine. When curing larger and smaller pieces of meat at the same time, place the larger pieces on the bottom and the smaller ones on top. This is so the smaller ones can be lifted out without disturbing the larger pieces. The small pieces do not take as long to cure as the bigger ones.

The meat should be cured in a temperature that is just above freezing. If the meat is cured at a warmer temperature the brine may show signs of souring. If this should happen, remove the meat and soak it in lukewarm water for an hour or so. Wash the meat in fresh cold water and be sure to throw out the soured brine. Clean out the container, repack the meat and make a fresh brine in original proportions.

Bacon sides and loins require 2 days per pound in this brine.
Shoulders will take 3 days per pound.
Hams will take 4 days per pound.

After the meat is cured the pieces should be soaked in warm water and then washed in cold water or even scrubbed with a brush to remove any scum that may have accumulated during the curing process.

Hang the meat by very heavy cords in the smoke house and allow to drain 24 hours before starting the smoking.

Hard wood is the best to use for smoking and the temperature in the smoke house should be 100-120 degrees F. The ventilators should be left open at first to allow any moisture to escape. Smoke until desired flavor and color is arrived at.

The Way We Did It...

As told by Glenn Adamson (born 1915)
We never had electricity or an ice house on the farm. Since we had no way of keeping meat refrigerated, we only killed animals as fast as we ate them. ...Pork was our main staple. It seemed there was always a pig just the right size to butcher. We ate more meat out on our farm than the typical family eats now. In the summer, what pork we didn't eat immediately was preserved. When we butchered a pig, Dad filled a wooden 45 gallon barrel with salt brine. We cut up the pig into maybe eight pieces and put it in the brine barrel. The pork soaked in the barrel for several days, then the meat was taken out, and the water was thrown away. We sacked a shoulder, a side of bacon, or the ham, which was the rear leg, in a gunny sack or flour sack to keep the flies off. It was then hung up in the coal house to dry. Quite often we had a ham drying, hanging on the shady side of the house. In the hot summer days after they had dried, they were put in the root cellar to keep them cool. The meat was good for eating two or three months this way. We didn't have a smoke house like some people had. But what we had worked just fine. In the winter time when we killed something we

didn't have to cure it. We'd hang it outside the house or somewhere else where it was cold and it kept just fine. (We're talking Canada, here, where it gets really cold.)
My Uncle George Ovard told me the following story when I was just a kid: He had put a pig in the brine barrel and when he went to take it out several days later he only found half of his meat. This puzzled him somewhat, but he never said anything about it. A couple of days later, one of his neighbors happened to stop by and mentioned, "I hear someone took some of your pork out of your brine barrel."
Uncle George said, "Yes, but I didn't tell anyone about it." The guy had trapped himself right there.

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