

Deejay's Smoke Pit

Beginners Guide to Smoking Food



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Table of Contents

Types of Smokers	3
Smoking Woods.....	8
Let's Make Fire!	13
Basic Smoke	15
Brining - The Flavor Powerhouse	18
Curing and Fermenting Agents.....	23
Basic Pulled or Sliced pork	28
Basic BBQ Poultry Smoke	31
Smoked BBQ Ribs.....	35
Smoking BBQ Brisket	37
BBQ Burnt Ends.....	40
Making Fattys.....	42
Making ABTs.....	44
Basic Jerky.....	46
Beef Bacon or Jerky Formed from Ground Beef	49
Smoked Mealoaf (Basic).....	50
Deejay's Stuffed Bell Peppers	51
Pizza and Calzones	52
Pizza and Calzones	52
Nuts and Snacks.....	53
Hot and Spicy Smoked Nuts.....	53
Glazed Spiced Smoked Nuts Recipe	53
Hot And Spicy Smoked Cajun Nut Mix	53
Hot & Smokey Crisp-x Mix.....	54

Types of Smokers

What Type of Smoker is Best For You?

There are several types of commercially available smokers. Which one is right for you? This is not a simple question and there are several things to take into consideration.

Do you want to stay with your smoker all day or do you want to be able to do chores around the house - to set it and forget it?

Maybe you want to be somewhat involved in the process but not tied to the smoker all day.

Do you want your major fuel source to be all wood, charcoal, propane, electric or a combination of several types.

Would you like this to be an alternate method for cooking in the event of power outages?

Do you find carrying empty propane tanks back and forth to the distributor inconvenient?

Do you have a readily available source for large volumes of wood anytime you want it?

Do you have a place to keep cords of wood?

Do you live in an area that gets extremely cold in the winter?

Do you frequently cook for large gatherings or parties?

These are a few of the questions you may want to think about before deciding which type of smoker you want to buy.

There are two basic types of smokers: Vertical and horizontal. These are then broken down further by size, and type of fuel. I will try to cover a few of each of the more popular units and mention some of the advantages and disadvantages of each type.

Vertical Smokers

Bullet type water smokers:

In this category you have companies like Brinkmann, Weber, Meco, Char Broil, Masterbuilt, Char Griller and more. These smokers are very similar and do require slight modification to perform at their best. They come in charcoal, electric, propane and a combination or all of these. They take a bit more tending than horizontal smokers but are very inexpensive and make great BBQ. They are highly recommended for the newbie that wants to try smoking but doesn't know if he/she is going to get into it, for those on a

limited budgets or for those with limited space. Prices range from \$39 to \$189 for the multi fuel types.



Brinkmann Gourmet Mountain
Charcoal or Electric



Brinkmann All-In-One
Charcoal, Electric and Propane



Masterbuilt 7 In-One
Charcoal, Electric and Propane



Weber Smokey
Charcoal

Brand	Model	Fuel	Grates	Capacity
Brinkmann	Gourmet	Charcoal	2	50 lbs.
	Gourmet	Electric	2	50 lbs.
	Smoke-n-Grill	Charcoal	2	50 lbs.
	Smoke-n-Grill	Propane	2	50 lbs.
	Smoke-n-Grill Stainless Steel	Charcoal	2	50 lbs.
	Sportsman	Charcoal	2	50 lbs.
	All-In-One	ALL 3	2	50 lbs.
	All-In-One Stainless		2	50 lbs.
Weber	Smokey Mountain Cooker	Charcoal	2	50 lbs.
Masterbuilt	7-In-One	ALL 3	2	50 lbs.
	7-In-One Stainless	ALL 3	2	50 lbs.
Kingsford	Bullet Smoker	Charcoal	3	50 lbs.

Vertical Cabinet Smokers



Brinkmann
Charcoal



Masterbuilt
Electric



Great Outdoors
Smokey Mountain
Propane



Camp Chef
Smoke Vault
Propane

Brand	Model	Fuel	Grates	Capacity
Brinkmann	Vertical	Charcoal	4	70 lbs.
	Vertical Electric	Electric	4	70 lbs.
	Vertical Electric Stainless	Electric	4	70 lbs.
Great Outdoors	3005	Propane	4	70 lbs.
	Deluxe Big Block	Propane	4	90 lbs.
Camp Chef	Smoke Vault 18"	Propane	4	70 lbs.
	Smoke Vault 24"	Propane	4	90 lbs.
Bradley	Bradley 4 Rack	Electric	4	60 lbs.
	Bradley 6 Rack	Electric	6	90 lbs.

NOTE: The Camp Chef Smoke Vault is now available with a stainless steel door.

Horizontal Smokers (Stick Burners)

I'm not going to go into too much detail about these because they are not what I consider entry level smokers. The purest will say this is the only way to produce good BBQ. I don't agree. It may use all wood or charcoal but it's the chef and not the cooker that makes good BBQ. Let's just say these beauties go from a mere \$129 to over \$3,495 for the Lang trailer mounted unit.

They can burn charcoal or logs and are not very fuel efficient but they often have a huge capacity and are used often for competition BBQ.



Brinkmann Stillwater



Char Griller Smoking Pro



Lang 84

I'm not going to go into too much detail about these because they are not what I consider entry-level smokers *for most people*, although many people have started with them with great results. They are a bit more difficult to master and except for the Lang require some modifications to perform properly. The Brinkmann and CharGriller can be found at Lowes, Home Depot or a good hardware store in most areas. The Lang can only be purchased through the Lang Smoker Cooker company in Nahunta, GA.

All three use charcoal or wood for the fuel source and a lot of it! They are not very fuel efficient! The purest will say this is the only way to produce good BBQ. I don't agree. It may use all wood for the fuel source but it's the chef and not the cooker that makes good BBQ. Let's just say these beauties go from a mere \$129 to over \$3,495 for the Lang trailer mounted unit. They require almost constant attention and plenty of wood, but will make great BBQ once you've mastered them. Just know that these are not like a grill where you turn it on and cook they require some effort. I've seen way too many people buy them only to get discouraged because they didn't know what they were buying.

The Lang burns logs and has a huge capacity they are often used for competition BBQ although any smoker that uses wood or charcoal can be used in competition. I have heard the Lang will use up to 1/4 cord of wood for one smoke – keep that in mind!

What smoker Should I use?

I currently have three smokers The Brinkmann All-In-One which I started with and still use quite often. It has multiple fuel options for cooking and I also use it for steaming corn, boiling ten gallons of pasta and sauce for parties and of course for brewing beer or frying turkeys. A great little all purpose smoker, steamer, fryer in electric, charcoal and propane all for under \$100! Its very portable. I did have to drill about 10 tiny 1/8 inch holes around the top for smoke venting and another 10 around the center ring to make it more controllable.

Read my article on [the Brinkmann All-In-One](#)

I also have the Camp Chef Smoke Vault 24" which I love using. I did buy the optional 5th grate, and eventually the sausage hanger, the bacon hanger, jerky racks and heavy

duty cover. I have two 20 lbs. propane tanks to keep it going. It is extremely temperature accurate and fuel efficient. Great for smoking meat and veggies or baking pies and cakes in the hot summer without heating up your kitchen! IMHO this is the best vertical propane smoker on the market – no modifications required for a perfect smoke!

Read my article on the [Camp Chef Smoke Vault](#)

My final smoker is a Chinese no name offset similar to the Char Griller Pro I picked up for \$57 on clearance. Couldn't resist! I performed several modifications to this unit to make it a smoker and a grill. It is not fuel efficient in the least. I uses enough fuel and wood to keep my Brinkmann going for an almost an entire season in one smoke! I do plan on a few more modifications but you can read about the ones I have done here:

[Horizontal Offset](#)

Smoking Woods

In general most hardwoods and fruitwoods can be used for smoking food. There are a few trees that remain controversial. For example some people claim that sassafras should not be used and others say they've used it without a problem. These woods are listed because I have personally used them or have been confirmed by higher authorities as safe to use for smoking food. Those listed as unsafe have been confirmed as unsafe or are still unresolved. When in doubt throw it out!

Wood Smoking Flavor Chart		
Wood Type	Smoking Flavor Characteristics	Meats Or Veggies To Use Wood With
Acacia	These trees are in the same family as mesquite. When burned in a smoker, acacia has a flavor similar to mesquite but not quite as heavy.	Good with most meats, especially beef and most vegetables.
Alder	A sweet, musky smoke that is the traditional wood of the Northwest.	Good with fish, pork, poultry, and light-meat game birds. Traditionally used in the pacific Northwest to smoke Salmon.
Almond	A nutty and sweet smoke flavor, light ash.	Good with all meats.
Apple	Slightly sweet but denser, fruity smoke flavor. Serve chutney made from the same fruit to accentuate the flavor even more.	The strongest flavor of all the fruitwoods. Beef, poultry, game birds, pork (particularly ham).
Apricot	The flavor is milder and sweeter than Hickory. Serve chutney made from the same fruit to accentuate the flavor even more.	Good with most meats.
Ash	Fast burner, light but distinctive flavor.	Good with fish and red meats.
Avocado	Unknown	Supposed to be good for all meats.
Bay	Medium floral smoke with hints of spice & cinnamon	Good with most meats and veggies.
Beech	A mild much used wood like oak. Great for whatever you care use it with.	Good with meat and seafood.
Birch	Medium hard wood with a flavor similar to maple.	Good with pork and poultry.
Blackberry	Much like the woods provided from fruit trees, the small diameter trunks of the Blackberry bush provides a slightly sweet and delicate flavor.	Good for grilling poultry and other meats, such as small game birds like grouse, pheasant, partridge, and quail.

Butternut	Strong smoke, like walnut, bitter when used alone	Good on red meats like Beef, Pork, Venison and other game meats. Can easily overpower poultry.
Carrotwood	Unknown	Supposed to be good for all meats.
Cherry	Slightly sweet fruity smoke that's great with poultry (turns skin dark brown). This smoke is a mild, sweet and fruity smoke which gives a rosy tint to light-colored meats.	Good with all meats. Great with all bacon types and hams.!
Chestnut	Slightly sweet nutty smoke flavor	Good with most meats.
Corncob	Although not considered to be a true wood. The heart of the cob that holds the kernels is the fuel section of this alternative for wood. It is ground into small granular bits that can be added to a smoking box or it can be combined with other woods such as woods from fruit trees, to impart several flavors. The Corncob provides a sweet flavor that may overpower the food if too much is used to season the food as it cooks. Begin by trying small amounts until the desired flavor is achieved.	It is often used as a smoking chip when grilling foods such as poultry, fish and small game birds.
Cottonwood	It is a softer wood than alder and very subtle in flavor. Use it for fuel but use some chunks of other woods (hickory, oak, pecan) for more flavor Don't use green cottonwood for smoking.	Use it for fuel but use some chunks of other woods (hickory, oak, pecan) for more flavor. Good for all smoking, especially pork and ribs.
Crabapple	Similar to apple. Provides a lot of smoke. Rich and fruity.	Good with poultry, red meats, game and lamb.
Fig	Mild & fruity like mulberry- Boston butt & ribs	Good with all meats.
Fruitwood	Medium fruity sweet smoke- all BBQ meats	Good with all meats.
Grapefruit	Produces a nice mild smoky flavor.	Excellent with beef, pork, fish and poultry.
Grapevines	Tart. Aromatic, similar to fruit wood. The flavor is milder and sweeter than hickory.	Great on most white or pink meats, including chicken, turkey, pork and fish.
Guava	Flowery fruity taste similar to apple.	Good for all meats,
Hickory	Sweet to strong, heavy bacon flavor. This great flavor works well with pork, ribs, hams, poultry, and beef. These chips should be soaked for 1-2 hours to prevent a bitter taste.	The most common wood used. Good for all smoking, especially pork and ribs. Great with all bacon types and hams.!

Jack Daniel's Chips	Made from the mellowing charcoal used to make Jack Daniel's that smooth sipping whiskey. This is a STRONG, sweet smoke flavor with an aromatic tang.	It's supposed to be good for cooking Beef, Pork, Poultry and Game meats. You will either like it or not - no maybes on this one!
Kiawe	Hawaiian Mesquite of sorts although somewhat milder.	Good on pork, beef and fish.
Lemon	A tangy, citrus smoke. Medium smoke flavor with a hint of fruitiness. Medium smoke flavor with a hint of fruitiness.	Excellent with beef, pork and poultry.
Lilac	Very light, subtle with a hint of floral.	Good with seafood and lamb.
Lime	Medium smoke flavor with a hint of fruitiness.	Excellent with beef, pork and poultry.
Maple	Mildly smoky, somewhat sweet flavor. Maple chips add a sweet, subtle flavor that enhances the flavor of poultry and game birds. Smoke a pork roast with them for a sensational taste experience.	Mates well with poultry, ham, cheese, small game birds, and vegetables. Wonderful for smoked turkey!
Mesquite	Strong earthy flavor. One of the most popular woods in the country, mesquite is a scrubby tree that grows wild in the Southwest. Sweeter and more delicate than hickory, it's a perfect complement to richly flavored meats such as steak, duck or lamb.	Good with most meats, especially beef and most vegetables.
Mulberry	A mild smoke with a sweet, tangy, blackberry-like flavor	Good with Beef, poultry, game birds, pork (particularly ham).
Nectarine	The flavor is milder and sweeter than hickory.	Good on most meats, great on most white or pink meats, including chicken, turkey, pork and fish.
Oak (White and Black Jack)	Most versatile of the hardwoods blending well with most meats. A mild smoke with no aftertaste. Oak gives food a beautiful smoked color.	Good with red meat, pork, fish and big game. RED OAK is good on ribs. Especially good with beef brisket.
Olive	The smoke favor is similar to mesquite, but distinctly lighter.	Delicious with poultry.
Orange	A tangy, citrus smoke. Medium smoke flavor with a hint of fruitiness. Orange gives food a golden color. Produces a nice mild smoky flavor.	Excellent with beef, pork and poultry. Great with all bacon types and hams.!
Peach	Slightly sweet, woodsy flavor, milder and sweeter than hickory.	Good on all meats, great on most white or pink meats, including chicken, turkey, pork and fish.
Pear	A nice subtle smoke flavor much like apple. Slightly sweet, woodsy flavor.	Good on Poultry, game birds and pork.

Pecan	Sweet and mild with a flavor similar to hickory but not as strong. Tasty with a subtle character an all-around superior smoking wood.	Try smoking with the shells as well. Good for most things including poultry, beef, pork and cheese. Pecan is the best for that beautiful golden-brown turkey.
Persimmon	Medium smoke- great for Boston butt & ribs	Excellent with beef, pork and poultry.
Pimento	Also referred to as Allspice, Jamaican Pepper, Myrtle Pepper, or Newspice. This wood adds a natural and somewhat peppery flavor that may also include flavors of several spices combined, such as cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg, similar to the flavors provided when allspice is used as a seasoning to enhance the flavor of various foods.	It is a common wood often used in grilling Jamaican foods such as jerk chicken. Often used for grilling poultry and fish.
Pistachio Nut Shells	If you like the taste of pistachio nuts why not?	Supposed to be good with anything but fish.
Plum/Prune	The flavor is milder and sweeter than hickory.	Good with most meats, great on most white or pink meats, including chicken, turkey, pork and fish.
Sassafras	A mild, musky, sweet smoke with a root beer aftertaste.	Especially good on beef, pork and poultry.
Seaweed	The seaweed is washed to remove the salt and air or sun-dried before use. It provides a somewhat spicy and natural flavor to the foods being smoked or grilled.	Commonly used for smoking shellfish such as clams, crab, lobster, mussels, and shrimp.
Walnut (Black)	While pecan is hickory's milder cousin, black walnut is the strong one. Often mixed with lighter woods like almond, pear or apple, can be bitter if used alone. An intense smoke that is slightly bitter like walnuts. Can easily overpower poultry.	Good on red meats like Beef, Pork, Venison and other game meats. Can easily overpower poultry.
Walnut (English)	Very heavy smoke flavor, usually mixed with lighter woods like almond, apple, pear or pecan.	Can be bitter if used alone. Good on red meats like beef, pork, venison and other game meats.
Whiskey Barrels	Made from whiskey soaked oak barrels.	Nice.

Wood that is poisonous when used for Smoking.

DO NOT USE any wood from conifer trees: PINE, FIR, SPRUCE, REDWOOD, CEDAR, CYPRESS, or they will make you sick!

DO NOT USE - ELM, EUCALYPTUS, SYCAMORE, SWEET GUM TREES and LIQUID AMBER wood is unsuitable for smoking.

More woods that you should not to use for smoking:

Never use lumber scraps, either new or used. First, you cannot know for sure what kind of wood it is; second, the wood may have been chemically treated; third, you have no idea where the wood may have been or how it was used.

Never use any wood that has been painted or stained. Do not use wood scraps from a furniture manufacturer as this wood is often chemically treated.

Never use wood from old pallets. Many pallets are treated with chemicals that can be hazardous to your health and the pallet may have been used to carry chemicals or poison.

Avoid old wood that is covered with mold and fungus that can impart a bad taste to your meat.

Here are a few wood suppliers that I have used in the past and found very good to do business with:

[Smokinlicious Woods](#) – *Doctor Smoke guarantees his woods to be bark free and chemical free! My personal favorite! Don't forget to try the Smokin' Dust!*

[Hawgeyes BBQ](#) – *Nice people –Good prices but does have bark. Good shipping rates!*

[Alabama Smoke Wood](#) – *Nice people –Good prices but does have bark. Good shipping rates!*

[Guava Wood Farms](#) –*Guava and Kiawie (a Hawaiian mesquite,) does have bark reasonable shipping!*

[BBQ Woods.com](#) – Good selection but shipping is based on price! Very High shipping rates!

[Natures Own](#) - From Rhode Island nice prices.

Let's Make Fire!

Okay so ... you've got a smoker, meat, fuel and wood not you need to make a fire! Do NOT use charcoal fluid. It's easier than you might think if you have the right tools. I suggest you get a charcoal chimney. You can get them from just about any place that sell grills or smokers – Ace Hardware, Wal-Mart, Lowe's and Home Depot come to mind. We're going to use what's been dubbed as the Minion Method. It's called that because it was started by a gentleman named Jim Minion.

Making Fire

- To make a fire I recommend a chimney. What's a chimney? A chimney is an open ended can similar to a coffee can with a small shelf in it to hold coals and newspaper. There are several pictures from various angles below.

To start your coals;



First take two sheets of newspaper, roll it loosely the long way and place it in the bottom of the chimney can. Leave the center open!

Next fill the can with coals. I use about 10 or 12 of them. It's good to keep track of how many you used so you can easily duplicate the process for you perfect smoke!



Finally light the newspaper from the holes in the bottom of the chimney in several places. Once it's lit it'll burn hot and fast so Set the chimney on something that won't catch fire and wait. When all the coals start to turn gray all over they're ready. This will take about 10 minutes!



While you wait for the coals to get hot, add some fresh coals to your smoker about 15 of them in for a Bullet smoker and mix in some wood chips or chunks. When the coals in the chimney are all gray dump it on top of the unlit coals in your smoker.

That's it you're ready to smoke some food! When the coals burn down and your temperature starts dropping just add more fresh coals. Again make a note of how many you used and this will make it real easy next time!

In my Brinkmann All-In-One it seems to work out to about a 10°F increase in temperature for each briquette added to the fire. That's a good starting point but your results may vary depending on the type of smoker you use, outside temperatures, winds and things like that. They all affect temperature!

Wind Breaks

At this point I think it would be wise to talk about wind-breaks. A wind-break is just a shelter to block the wind. It can be constructed from anything – preferably non-flammable! Even if you live in an area where the temperatures don't get bitterly cold you could benefit from a wind break. We all suffer with high winds and rain from time to time and with so little time available for our long slow smokes we don't want it ruined by the weather do we?

Some people get very creative with their wind-breaks and build fancy shelters that blend in with their landscapes. Mine is simply several pieces of Styrofoam board held together with pencils to shield the smokers from the wind and snow.

If you have a garage you might want to consider a temporary wind-break that you can tear down at the end of a long smoke, if not you may want to consider something more permanent to protect your investment.



I don't have a garage so this serves as my wind break and my storage shed all year round. It saves me a bundle on fuel as it is constructed out of 4 inch thick Styrofoam board and it's temporary because it's held together with pencils so I can move it around at will by just pulling a pencil! It faces my kitchen doors so the front is pretty well protected from the wind and being temporary I don't need a permit from the town to build it or get an increase in my taxes!

I had to rebuild my structure somewhat to house the three smokers I have now in there and protect me a bit from the weather but for now it works and has for well over a year now. Enjoy!

Basic Smoke

This is all about Smoking Meat and most people that know me know I like it to keep things simple. Life is already too complicated so why complicate smoking meat - we're just trying to have fun here and a good meal to boot so . . . remember keep it simple! That being said let's first define what barbeque is not:

Smoking Meat or BBQ is not throwing a burger and hogs on a grill turning up the gas and toasting them until they are charred. That is called grilling and it is-not Barbeque!

Smoking Meat or BBQ is slow cooking at low temperatures with tiny wisps of thin blue smoke, which allow the natural juices of the meat to break down the tougher tissues until it's falling apart tender.

I'm not going to tell you to go out and buy this or that brand of smoker, or that you need to smoke with this wood or that, or that you need to use wood, gas or electric smokers for a good smoke. That is up to you.

Any smoker can produce a great smoked meat and BBQ if you follow a few simple rules! It doesn't have to be expensive. I've been using a very inexpensive Brinkman bullet style water smoker for some time now and my Q's are as good as the guys that have smokers worth more than my family car! – It's the cook not the smoker that makes a good BBQ!

SO where do we begin?

Before you get started you need a few things at a minimum to smoke meat.

- a. a smoker or grill
- b. a fuel source (wood, propane, electric, or charcoal)
- c. wood chips, chunks or logs (if you have a logs burner)
- d. at least one good thermometer two is better
- e. Utensils forks or tongs for grabbing food
- f. Gloves

I'm going to assume you have already built or purchased some form of smoker for now and that you know how to produce heat. Notice I said heat not smoke. There is a difference. We don't want a roaring flame here this is not Burger King! This is about smoking food. Make sure you have plenty of fuel to produce heat.

We need wood to smoke. Where do we get wood for smoking? Don't go out to the local lumberyard that's not what we want it's probably full of chemicals. Unless you have a log burner (most people don't) we want small chunks of wood no bigger than the palm of your hand or wood chips similar to what you might put around your garden shrubs. (But don't use this type). They can be purchased at most department store chains in the BBQ section (not the landscape section) or online. You can also make your own.

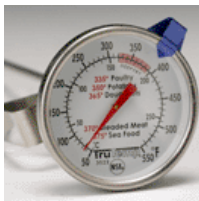
My brother -in-law has a wood stove and generates lots of wood chips and chunks when he splits the logs. He saves the hickory, oak, and maple scraps and I collect these chips and chunks and use them for smoking. Do not collect the bark it doesn't make as good a flavor. I also have a bunch of dwarf fruit trees in my yard and I save the limbs and branches from pruning for smoking.

What kind of woods is good for smoking meat? Hickory and Mesquite are probably the most common and can be purchased at Wal-Mart or most hardware stores but you can use most hardwoods and fruitwoods. Hopefully you browsed the section before this to get some ideas.

New woods are being added and as I get better information some changes will be made so check it once in awhile to be sure you have the latest version. Some woods once thought to be bad have proven to be good to smoke meat with so I will try to keep abreast of the changes as they arise.

Thermometers. You simply cannot smoke food without a least one good thermometer! You need to carefully monitor your smokers heat output and your meats internal temperature to produce good BBQ.

Here are a few popular models. I suggest if you go with the digital you also have a dial thermometer for a secondary or back up incase your batteries go dead. If you get a dial thermometer make sure it's adjustable (little nut behind the face on the probe).



Taylor Dial Thermometer

Range 50°F to 550°F and 50°C to 285°C. Adjustable temperature indicator. Stainless steel 12" stem with adjustable pan clip



Maverick Remote Cooking Thermometer - ET72

The Redi-Chek Remote digital probe means you can take the receiver with you, up to 100 ft away (1/3 the length of a football field), and still stay updated on the cooking temperature of your food.



Maverick ET-73 Redi-Chek® Wireless Remote Smoker Thermometer

remote sensor/transmitter monitors the temperatures of both the meat and the smoking chamber and transmits them up to 100 feet to the displaying receiver



Polder Dual Sensor Thermometer

A cooking thermometer and timer in one! Dual sensing probe measures temperature of food and oven.

Dual sensor in a single probe, Monitor food and oven temps at the same time Actual temperature range: 32°F to 572°F Pre-settable alarm temperature range: 86°F to 572°F 10 hour count down feature Includes stopwatch and overtime count-up feature as well

Utensils -- anything you need to lift, turn, grab or carry your food. Extra long tongs are a must! Get it washed and ready before you get started! Things to keep around:

Heavy-duty wide aluminum foil around for wrapping your prize
Plastic wrap wide for wrapping the meat and sealing in the juices
Zip lock bags extra large, large and small
Spices galore!

High temperature gloves - are very important to prevent burns when things go wrong- and they will! Get them and use them.

Fire extinguisher - anywhere you play with fire you should have a fire extinguisher. An ABC type extinguisher will suit you well. If you don't have at least one in your kitchen shame on you!!

Now that you have everything ready it's time to prepare the smoker for use. Just like a good ole skillet it has to be seasoned first. There are a number of ways to do this. First wash it all down inside and out, and dry it off. Then easy way to season is to spray in inside pieces, covers, grates and walls with some sort of non stick spray. I prefer to warm it up slightly but not so warm that you can't hold it and rub bacon fat all over it. Warm it again and rub in some more bacon fat. Do this about three times and your ready to smoke!

Hot smoking and Cold smoking

There are two methods used for smoking foods Hot Smoking and Cold Smoking.

Hot Smoking is generally used for cooking food slowly at temperatures between 230 and 250°F. These temperatures are high enough to kill most bacteria and don't always require using a cure. For recommended internal cooking temperature download my Time and Temperature chart.

Cold Smoking is normally used to smoke but not cook food at temperatures of less than 130°F such as bacon, hams, and fish. These temperatures are not hot enough to kill bacteria and require using a chemical cure such as Prague Powder #1 or Tender Quick to keep bacteria from multiplying.

Meat spoilage is caused by bacteria, some of which are harmful to humans. Disease-causing organisms are capable of growing at temperatures of 40-140°F. This is called the "danger zone", and can spoil meat within a few hours.

Brining - The Flavor Powerhouse

One of the most underutilized cooking, grilling and meat smoking tools is brining. Brining can enhance flavors, add a protective cushion to cooking times and make meat flavorful and juicy even when over cooked!

So what is brining anyway?

Brining is simply adding a salty liquid to the meat which penetrates the meat. You may use either a plain salt, water and sugar brine or one with added herbs and spices. Salt will actually expand the meats protein molecules allowing it to hold more water, which in turn gives you a juicier end product. Adding herbs and spices to your brine allows the flavors to penetrate the meat while the molecules are still open. Why not pull all your favorite spices in at the same time as the water? Brining also has a side effect of killing off harmful bacteria making it less likely to make you sick or worse kill you.

What do I need for a good brine?



A container large enough to hold the meat and the water. I use a large empty Utz cheese ball container to brine chickens and small turkeys. It holds up to 12 pounds of chicken parts or up to a 18 pound turkey when split down the back or a 13 pound whole turkey. You may have to jiggle it around to get it in but it doesn't take up a lot of refrigerator space.

You can use any non reactive food grade container or even large vacuum sealed bags just make sure the meat is fully submerged! If you have a large empty spare refrigerator a 5 gallon pickle bucket tossed out from your local restaurant will work great for large pieces of meat.

A brine consists of three main ingredients. Water, Salt and sugar.

As with most recipes you'll want the best ingredients available. If you have chlorinated city water you may want to boil it first and let it sit over night to get rid of the chlorine taste. This is not really important as the flavor of the chlorine is not as obvious in brines as it is when brewing beer.

The second main ingredient is Salt. Sea salt, Kosher salt, pickling salt or flaked salt will work fine for this. I don't use Iodized salts for anything but common table salt but it may also be used here if you choose. You'll need about 1 cup of salt per each gallon of water used.

The final main ingredient is sugar. Why sugar? I have found that salt can be very harsh. The sugar will offset the harness of the salt and add a bit of sweetness to the brine. Sugar

also browns up nicely when baked, grilled or smoked! You want to add about 1/2 cup sugar to 1 gallon of water.

Adding Spices. As I mentioned earlier this is a good time to add additional spices which will flavor the meat. If you like the flavor of certain spices on your meat, try adding it to the brine water where it will be absorbed into the meat! I love adding things like garlic, basil, Cajun spice, and thyme to my brines. You know what you like throw it in there!

How long Should I Brine?

Many people say that you can't over brine meat. I disagree. That's like saying you can't over salt your food. Through the process of osmosis the salt in the water will eventually equal the salt in the meat, but 1 cup of salt is an awful lot of salt! I don't want my birds that salty do you? So that being said - you can over brine. Some of us like salt more than others so you decide what level of saltiness you want in your food. I have done a lot of little experiments in brining and the results are listed below. The maximum recommended times for brining are as follows:

Meat	Time in hours
Chicken Breast Bone in	2-1/2
Chicken Breast Boneless	2
Chicken Whole Small	6 to 12
Chicken Whole Large	12 to 24
Turkey Breast Bone in	12 to 18
Turkey Breast Boneless	6 to 12
Turkey Whole 15 lbs.	24
Turkey Whole over 15 lbs	24 to 36
Pork Loin	12
Pork Shoulder	12 to 36
Pork Butt	12 to 36
Pork Chops	2

After brining for the allotted time rinse the food thoroughly in plain water to remove any excess salt and let it rest from 2 hours to overnight. That'll give the meat time to equalize the flavors and it'll taste even better. If you plan on adding any rubs or spices to the meat before cooking this is a good time to do it. Wrap the meat completely in plastic wrap and refrigerate over night for the best absorption of spices.

So what happens if you over brine?

Are you stuck with too much salt? Not necessarily. You can rinse off the food and throw it back into some plain water to try and reduce the salt level. All of the salt can't be removed but you can remove about half of the salt in the meat by soaking in plain water for several hours to over night.

So what kind of brines should I Use for what types of meat?

As I mentioned previously – it can be as simple as water, salt and sugar and your favorite spices but I will list a few good basic ideas to get you started and if you really want to experiment you can download my eBook of brines here: [DJ's Brining Book](#)

Basic Chicken Brine

1 gallon water
1/3 cup salt
1/3 cup sugar
2 bay leaves
3 tablespoons black peppercorns
2 cloves garlic smashed
1 tablespoon Cajun spice
1/2 onion sliced
1 lemon or orange sliced and squeezed

Basic Pork Brine

1 gallon water
1/3 cup salt
1/3 cup brown sugar
2 bay leaves
3 tablespoons black peppercorns
1 tablespoon Juniper Berries
2 cloves garlic smashed
1 tablespoon Cajun spice

It is best to take a cup or so of the brine water and boil it then add the other ingredients to the boiling water to dissolve them completely. Before adding it back to the remaining water cool it down to room temperature – you don't want to cook the meat!

Designing a Brine

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. For this example we will be designing a brine for smoking a ham.

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 or molasses

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. Sugar can be in any form dextrose, white sugar, brown sugar, honey, maple syrup, and molasses are all sugars, which one you choose it up to you.

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.

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.

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.

ENjoy!

Curing and Fermenting Agents

There are many types of curing agents. Some common some not so common. Some are sold under specific trade names and all claim to be relatively safe if used according to the manufacturers instructions.

What is Curing ?

Curing is the preservation and flavoring processes, of meat or fish, by the adding a combination of salt, sugar and either nitrate or nitrite. Curing in a water solution or brine is called *wet-curing* or *pickling* or *brining*.

What are Nitrates/Nitrites?

Nitrates and nitrites are chemicals that can be found naturally in our environment. Two of earth's most common elements, nitrogen and oxygen, combine to form these nitrogen-containing compounds. Nitrates are essential (needed) nutrients for plants to grow. Nitrates can be found in the air, soils, surface waters and ground water (underground drinking water).

Do Nitrates/Nitrites cause cancer?

Studies have shown that exposure to nitrates can cause cancer in lab animals. Nitrates, when used as preservatives and color-enhancing agents for meats, can react with the body's natural amino acids to form nitrosamines. Nitrosamines have been linked with cancers in humans.

How can I avoid exposure to Nitrates/Nitrites?

It would be extremely difficult to avoid exposure to nitrates. Vegetables are the main source of nitrates, but vegetables are good for you so no one would suggest removing vegetables from your diet. However, you can reduce your intake of nitrates by reducing the amount of preserved meats you eat (such as sausage, bacon, hot dogs, etc.).

Why Do We use Nitrates?

Nitrates are used to treat the symptoms of angina (chest pain), to relieve an attack that is occurring by using the nitrates when the attack begins, to prevent attacks from occurring by using the nitrates just before an attack is expected to occur or to reduce the number of attacks that occur by using the nitrates regularly on a long-term basis. I have seen this phenomenon first hand.

Nitrates and nitrites also help kill bacteria, and produce a characteristic flavor, and give meat a pink or red color. The usage of either compound is carefully regulated in the production of cured products; in the United States, their concentration in finished products is limited to 200 ppm, and it is usually lower.

The curing process has some risk of contamination by harmful bacteria. The direct use of nitrite, which controls some of these harmful bacteria, reduces the risk of contamination, and they are irreplaceable in the prevention of botulinum poisoning from consumption of smoked foods and dry-cured sausages.

Some Popular Nitrate/Nitrite Curing Agents

Prague powder #1 is a mixture of 1 part sodium nitrite and 16 parts salt. You normally use 1 level teaspoon of cure for 5 lb. of meat. Used at any time meat is not immediately put into freezer or refrigerator, such as smoking, air-drying, dehumidifying, etc. This is similar to and sometimes called Curing Salt.

Prague powder #2 is a mixture of 1 part sodium nitrite, .64 parts sodium nitrate and 16 parts salt. You normally use 1 level teaspoon of cure for 5 lb. of meat. mainly used for products that will be air cured for long time like: Country Ham, salami, pepperoni, and other dry sausages.

Instacure 1 is a mixture of 1oz of Sodium Nitrite (6.25 %) to 1 lb of salt. Used at any time meat is not immediately put into freezer or refrigerator, Such as smoking, air- drying, dehumidifying, etc.

Instacure 2 is a mixture of 1 oz of Sodium Nitrite (6.25 %) along with .64 oz of Sodium Nitrate (4 %) to 1 lb of salt. mainly used for products that will be air cured for long time like: Country Ham, salami, pepperoni, and other dry sausages.

Note: The Curing Salts above contain FDA an approved red coloring agent that gives them a slight pink color eliminating any possible confusion with common salt those listed below which do not have the red coloring agent - so be especially careful when using and storing these products to eliminate the possibility of poisoning your family!

Morton's Tender Quick is a mixture of salt, sodium nitrite, sodium nitrate and sugar. Exact proportions could not be obtained. You normally use 1 level tablespoon of cure for 1 lb. of meat.

Morton's Sugar Cure (Plain) is used for dry or sweet pickle curing of meat, poultry, game, salmon, shad and sablefish. It is primarily used for dry curing hams and bacon. It contains salt, sugar, propylene glycol, sodium nitrate and sodium nitrite, a blend of natural spices and dextrose (corn sugar). Morton Sugar Cure (Plain) mix can be used interchangeably with Morton Tender Quick mix.

Morton Smoke Flavored Sugar Cure – is used especially for dry curing large cuts of meat like hams or bacon. It contains salt, sugar, sodium nitrate, propylene glycol, caramel color, natural hickory smoke flavor, a blend of natural spices and dextrose (corn sugar). The cure reaction takes longer with Morton Smoke Flavored Sugar Cure mix than with plain Morton Sugar Cure mix, so the smoke flavored product should be used only for dry curing and not for making a brine (pickle) solution.

Salt Peter typically refers to the chemical compound potassium nitrate, though it may also refer to sodium nitrate. It is used in gunpowder, firecrackers, ice cream, toothpaste and other food products as a curing agent.

Common Curing Salts

Salts inhibit bacterial growth; moisturize and tenderizes and adds flavor to meat.

Kosher salt also sold as rock salt, is a type of coarse salt which is usually made without additives. Kosher salt has a milder flavor and the flaky crystalline structure of the salt helps it adhere to a variety of surfaces from fish to margarita glasses.

Canning salt is a particular variety of salt that is used in canning. Canning salt is a fine-grained salt and is iodine-free. It also does not have the anti-caking ingredients used in regular table salt. The lack of additives means the canning salt will not turn vegetables — particularly pickles — a dark color, nor will it make their liquid cloudy. Pickles made with table salt would be perfectly safe to eat — they just wouldn't look very pretty. Canning salt, on the other hand, produces a clear brine that is suitable for picking.

Sea salt is formed from the natural evaporation of ocean water, generally in man-made pools near a protected shoreline. Sea salt is 98% sodium chloride, compared to table salt's 99.9% purity. The remaining 2 percent can be trace minerals such as iron, magnesium, sulfur or iodine. Unlike table salt, which is mined from land-based sources, natural sea salt does not contain added sugar, anti-caking ingredients or potassium iodide. Sea salt is also considered Kosher, which means it has been approved by rabbis for use by observant Jews.

Citric salt is actually an acid, not salt as cooks conventionally think of it. It is an acidic substance commonly found in citrus fruits which is added to foods to make them more tart and sour tasting. It may also be labeled as sour salt or citric acid.

Products Used for adding Tang to Sausages

That mouth watering tang you get in aged sausages like salamis and pepperonis is due to a lactic acid build up during the aging process. There are several ways to accomplish this by using the products listed below:

Cultured Starters – The old Tried and True way - aging

Starter cultures are freeze dried and add lactic acid to the sausages which gives you that tang and mouth watering flavor in sausages like pepperoni and salami. Lactic acid also helps to prevent spoilage in your sausages. Using starter cultures is no more complicated than adding yeast to bread yet it has been made to sound like rocket science!

When adding the culture to meat, it is important to have spices dispersed so the salt and nitrite do not kill bacteria. The cultures need some sugar (dextrose or sucrose) to grow and produce acid.

The more sugar that is added, the lower the pH obtained. Temperature and percent humidity factor in to the growth as well. The longer meat products are kept at the ideal internal temperature, the more cultures grow and the lower pH. Ideally the pH of your raw meat mix should be around 6.5 to 7.0.

This is the only way to get that old world mouth watering tang! Other methods try to duplicate the by lowering the pH of the product but fall short. They all have that mass produced artificial flavor but we've come to accept poor quality as in exchange for lower prices.

The cultures are sold in small foil packages just like yeast and you store them in the freezer. You only use 1/8 teaspoon dissolved in water for every five pounds of meat and you'll get that allusive mouthwatering tang in your sausages! I use Bactoferm™ F-RM-52 and Bactoferm™ LHP which go for about \$15 a package and will do 230 pounds of meat. They can be purchased here: <http://www.butcher-packer.com/>

Encapsulated Citric Acid

Encapsulated citric acid effectively preserves sausage and meat products and is used a lot today in commercial products. Product quality is maintained while pH remains controlled. Company processes have eliminated the use of starter cultures and has increased production capacity with the shortening of cook cycles which makes the product cheaper to manufacture. Although it does produce a tang it is more of an acidic tang not quite the same thing.

Encapsulated citric acids are made by coating citric acid with maltodextrine, a hydrogenated vegetable oil, which by design will melt at 135° F. What this means is that the citric acid will not blend with the meat and lower the pH until the internal temperature of the sausages reach 135° F in the smoker preventing the meat from getting crumbly.

Encapsulated citric acid should be used when making summer sausage or snack sticks when the classic tang is desired due to reduced pH, but the long fermentation cycle is not. Encapsulated acids for sausage should be added just before stuffing and mixed into the meat. Do not grind after adding the capsules.

Fermento

Fermento is another product used to produce a tangy taste in normally fermented sausages. The recommended level to start with is 3%, (about 1 oz. per lb. of meat) add up to 6% to produce a more tangy taste, but do not exceed 6% or the sausage will become mushy. This product does not require refrigeration.

Fermento is used to eliminate the curing times necessary for the fermentation process to take place. When using starter cultures you may have to wait up to two days for the culture to create enough lactic acid to lower the pH to sufficient levels where with Fermento you can start smoking right away. Fermento is suggested for products such as; Venison Summer Sausage, Cervelat, Goetburg, and any other Summer Sausage. The usage is usually about 6 oz of Fermento per 10 lbs of meat

Buttermilk Solids – a Fermento Replacement

Any sausage recipes using "Fermento" can be made by either using dry buttermilk solids as a replacement, or possibly liquid buttermilk to replace the liquid portion of the sausage recipe. and in my humble opinion works equally as well as Fermento.

Creating Shelf Stable Meat Products

Shelf stable products are products that do not require refrigeration. This may be something to strive for with sausages such as snack sticks, summer sausages and Slim Jims. In order to be shelf stable sausages must achieve the following:

a pH of less than 5.0; or a Water activity of less than 0.91

or

a pH of less than 5.2 and a water activity of less than 0.95

* pH is simply a measure of the amount of acid in a product.

** Water activity is the measure of relative humidity expressed as a decimal.

To download this information click here: [Cures & Fermenting](#)

Other Products and Methods Used in Curing

Sugar: reduces harshness of salt; Indirectly acts to inhibit harmful bacteria.

Ascorbic acid (Vitamin C), vinegar, erythorbic acid, glucono-d-lactone: these are all cure accelerators (accelerate color formation by nitrites); they may have antibacterial activity.

Seasoning/herbs: provide flavoring; certain compounds in herbs/spices are anti-bacterial, but probably not important at concentrations usually used.

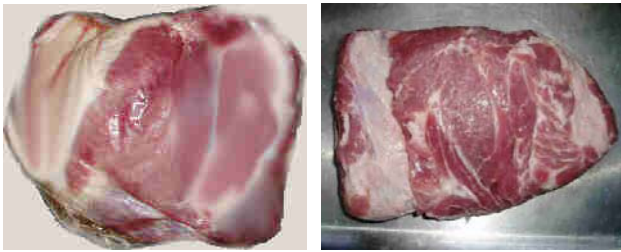
Injection brining It is fine for flavor brining, IF the meat will not be in the danger zone for more than 4 hours, OR the meat will be cooked to at least 160F. When combined with immersion brining, injection brining can be an especially quick and effective method of curing meat. Injection brining can also be used with dry curing. When this method is used it is usually done on large cuts of meat. It reduces the chance of spoilage, and helps the outside and center of the cut cure at the same time.

ENjoy!

Basic Pulled or Sliced pork

I love pork. Sliced or pulled I love pork! I think of all the meats sliced or pulled pork and pastrami are my favorite things to smoke! You can use a Boston Butt or fresh shoulder or picnic. I use shoulders a lot because they are on sale more often and because they are readily available at my local market. Boston Butts tend to yield a bit more meat than picnics.

Here's a picture of a fresh picnic and a Boston Butt I purchased at my local grocers:



To prepare the pork just rub it down real well with yellow mustard or mustard powder and maybe some of your favorite rub, and let it sit it until smoking time. For more information about rubs download DeeJay's Book of Rubs from the Herbs and Spice Downloads page. Once in the smoker spray it with apple juice every hour or so during smoking.



Here's a butt Slathered in Yellow Mustard

A shoulder or butt will take about 1.5 hours per pound of meat to smoke. You will need to smoke the meat at 225° - 230°F until the internal temperature reaches 140°. AT that point you will no longer get an increase in smoke ring but it will continue to absorb the smoky flavor. From there take it up to 180°F if you plan to slice it, or 200° - 205°F if your plan is to pull it.

I like to cook my pork to around 160° -165° F internally without a wrap, then finish my by wrapping it in multiple layers of plastic wrap then with a layer of foil on the outside to help collect the meat juices which I will later add to the meat or make a gravy with.

Do this until the internal temperature is between 200° to 205° F. Next, leave it in the plastic wrap and let it rest wrapped in towels in a cooler for a few hours. This really makes it juicy and tender.

Many purists object to this procedure but after an hour or so you will have much more meat juice, "au jus" to add to your dipping sauce to just pour over the slices before serving or to make a nice gravy with!

Now large pieces of meat are a little unpredictable. I've had 11 pound butts go for 12 to 14 hours. If it's getting late and you want to go to bed you can set your oven temperature to 200° F throw the wrapped butt or shoulder in the oven and let it go until morning. The plastic wrap will hold in most of the juices and the foil will catch any that leaked out of the plastic wrap and just be sure put the whole thing in a shallow pan to catch anything that may escape so you don't have a mess in the morning.

If it's wrapped in plastic I don't think you can really cook a butt to long if you maintain 200° F in your oven. I've had them in there for up to 10 hours after a 8 to 10 hour smoke and they still come out tender and juicy!

About plastic wrap – I don't like saran wrap. It smells to much like plastic. I generally buy the restaurant grade wrap at BJ's or Sam's club. It's much cheaper in the long run, doesn't leave a plastic smell behind and it will hold up in the oven up to 250° F. In a pinch if I run out I will use Reynolds brand plastic wrap because BJ's is an hour away from me!

The Smoking Plateau many marinades and flips later the meat has reached 151° F and reached a plateau. Anyone who has smoked meat has experienced this strange phenomenon. The meat reaches a certain temperature and gets stuck at that temperature for sometimes hours on end.

Once temperature has finally started to rise again and very slowly over the next several hours it makes its way up to 165° F then 170° F then 175° F. I normally remove the pork once it reaches 185° F unless I am going to pull it. If plan to pull it I will let it get up to 200° F.

Pour the meat juices into a bowl and put it the refrigerator while you pull the pork or while the meat is resting before slicing. After the meat juice solidifies run paper towel lightly around the fat (the orange stuff) and it will stick to the paper towel. Once the fat is removed heat it in the microwave, mix juices the meat and enjoy. Doing this will ensure you'll never have a greasy pulled pork!



Chilled Au jus with fat on the surface

Chilled fat sticking to the paper towel

If you let it sit for an hour or so you can tear the meat apart with two forks or use your hands. If done properly the meat will just fall apart in your hands. All you have to do is pick out the fat.



Butt just falling apart in my hands
No "pulling" required!



Removing the fat from between the muscles

Another tip - when pulling pork if you're anything like me – **I HATE FAT!** It just gags me. I separate each of the muscle groups scrape off the all the fat and break the meat into bite sized pieces. Some people prefer the long strips of pork but I'm always afraid the little ones will choke on it so I make everything bite sized and my thumbs are just about the right width – so I grab a piece between thumb and forefinger pull it apart.



Fat and bone, pulled meat, jelled Au Jus and tiny orange fat blob



Here it is the pulled pork with nothing added but it's own sweet meat juices

BTW – it's also less messy to eat in bite sized pieces. It won't slap you in the chin like spaghetti! If you have any leftovers it's ready to throw in your next pot of chili, or carne guisada! Of course the size of your pieces is up to you! ENjoy!

Don't forget the dipping sauce! This is my favorite dipping sauce below:

Deejay's Infamous Dipping Sauce For Pulled Pork

2-juiced lemons,
1 teaspoon white pepper,
1 teaspoon sea salt,
1 teaspoon Cajun spice,
4 teaspoons pure Maple syrup,
4 teaspoons Tomato Based BBQ sauce (in the recipe section)

Basic BBQ Poultry Smoke



There are many ways to cook a poultry. You can bake it, broil it, grill it fry, put it on a rotisserie or my favorite – smoke it!

My two favorite processes for whole turkeys or chickens are brining and injecting. I use both and my birds are juicy and tender every time! I can't take credit for this technique I learned it from our TV buddy Ron Popiel. Thanks Ron! In fact I didn't even like turkey until I bought his famous set it and forget it "Show Time Rotisserie." They are fantastic! Perfect tender and juicy

meats every time and the food injection process he talks about in his infomercial is something you really want to try – especially on poultry! If he invents a machine that combines smoking and the Show Time Rotisserie – I'm gonna be on it like white on rice!

Okay let's get back to the bird!

Brining

Brining is simple technique of soaking the bird in water with salt and maybe sugar and a few spices added. It could be simply water and salt but hey while that birds sucking in the water don't you want it to drag in all your favorite spices too? Brining requires that you soak the bird in the brining solution either over night up to 24 hours, or at least four to six hours before smoking.

Here is my favorite brining solution:

- 1-1/2 gallons ice cold water
- 1/2 cup salt (sea or kosher)
- 2 teaspoons Garlic Power
- 2 teaspoons Onion Powder
- 2 teaspoons Cajun Spice
- * 1/3 cup Dextrose or sugar - optional

* Sugar is optional. Some people say it helps balance the salt but most recipes will suggest you use as much as a full cup of salt – that would be salty for my taste and you would really need sugar to offset the saltiness. I choose to reduce the salt instead. Although Pure Vermont Maple Syrup is a nice flavor to add to that bird!

Take a few cups of water and boil it. You can throw it in a microwave for a few minutes to speed up the process. Place it in a heat resistant bowl and stir in your salt and sugar to dissolve them. The salt is the hardest to dissolve, so keep your eyes on it. Once they have dissolved add the rest of your spices stir them in then add a few ice cubes to cool it down or just wait. Now add you're the mix to your ice water and stir it up well.

Throw the bird in the brine, tilting the cavity up so it fills with water and doesn't try to float. Place something heavy on top to keep the turkey submerged and wait. I like to inject the bird at about 3 inch intervals with the brine water on shorter brines or 4 to 6 hours to sort of jump start it.

In the photo below I am just using a plastic food storage container filled with brine water to hold the bird down. A heavy plate will work as well.

NOTE: if you are brining in the summer you may want to add an ice cube tray full of ice once or twice during a 24 hour brine or if you have a container that will hold the bird and brine you can place in the refrigerator do it. You want to keep this bird below 40°F to prevent bacterial growth!



Whole chicken brining in an Empty Utz Cheeseball jug

Brining requires that you soak the bird in the brining solution either over night up to 24 hours, or four to six hours before smoking. After the brining is complete rinse the bird in clear fresh water to rinse off any extra salt that may be on the bird. Rinse for about 5 minutes changing the water a few times. Don't soak the bird just rinse!

Flavor Injecting



Flavor Injecting, injecting for short, is taking a solution of some kind of fluid and spices in a large syringe made for food, filling it, then injecting the fluid into the meat. It's a way of spicing up the meat on the inside and making it tastier and juicier in the process.

The injector can be purchased at most department stores and cooking shops. One of my injectors looks like the one above. There are numerous injectors available at a full range of prices. I even bought one at Wal-Mart for like \$4.

NOTE: When not using the injector, remove the needle, slide the piston in almost all the way with the cap off and slip the needle in the piston shaft, screw the cap down. The needle is a bit too long to snug the cap down but it will keep you from getting stuck by the needle or keep you from losing it!

Deejay's Infamous Poultry Flavor Injection

- 1 stick of margarine, butter or Butter Buds
- 3/4 teaspoon Garlic Powder
- 3/4 teaspoon Onion Powder
- ** 3/4 teaspoon Cajun Spice **
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper

** Download my free eBook of [70 Ethnic, International and Regional Spice Blends](#) the eBook includes a recipe to mix your own Cajun Spice as well as many other popularly purchased spice blends!

Place your bird in a shallow pan or a clean sink this can get messy and it also allows you to collect and reuse the spilled injector fluids to rub the outer surface of the skin.

Inject the bird in several spots all over it. I use a spacing of about three inches. If you inject deeply into the meat at an angle you can flavor a lot of meat without poking a lot of holes. As to press the injector plunger in slowly pull the needle out at about the same rate of speed. Don't forget the wings and legs! One or two injections in a wing or leg parallel to the bone will do it!

If your using butter as your base it will start to solidify once injected and the stuff that spills can be rubbed on the surface of the skin. I also sprinkle some of the same blend of spices on the outside of the bird. It will stick to the butter you just rubbed all over the bird. You can do this or add a bit of your favorite rub.

For more information about rubs download [Deejay's Book of Rubs](#) from the Herbs and Spice Downloads page.

Smoking the Bird

Once the bird is brined, and injected you can begin your smoke. Now the general rule for smoking dictates a low and slow with light wispy smoke. This is not the best method for smoking poultry however. Unlike briskets, Boston butts and ribs poultry does not have tough connective tissues that need be to broken down. Poultry is naturally tender and fatty. The skin on poultry is full of fat compressed between the layers of the skin. In order to render this fat and get a nice crispy skin you need higher temperatures!

Smoke poultry at between 300° - 375° F for the best results.

NOTE: Some smokers will not consistently reach 350 ° F let alone 375 ° F - this is the reason I have given you a full range of temperatures to choose from. Whatever the highest temperature is in that *range that your smokers is capable of* – use that temperature!

Whatever temperature you to use smoke the poultry - smoke it until it reaches 168°F in the thickest part of the thigh or breast. Poultry cooking time ends up being between 15 and 20 minutes *per pound of meat* between 300 and 375°F, but it's the temperature not the time you need to watch! The time is just a guideline for a guess of when to start cooking not when to finish cooking!

Chicken is a fast smoke so it's great for a week day meal, picnic or to feed that need to smoke during the work week!

Woods like cherry, orange and tangerine will give your poultry a nice deep red/orange color with great flavor. Try mixing these in with your other favorite smoking woods! I like to mix these woods with hickory or pecan.

Place the bird on the lowest grate you can manage with a pan on the grate below to catch the juices. Place foil in the pan or you have a water pan, place foil on the pan suspended above the bottom. You don't want the foil to touch the bottom because the

heat from the pan will cause the juices to dry up. Add about a cup and a half of water to the pan to mix with the juices and to prevent drying.



To the left is a picture of my water pan foiled to capture the juice for making gravy later. Notice how the foil is just a few inches below the top of the pan and all the juices are captured in the pan. Pour a little water in the pan to keep it from drying out.



Once the bird reaches 165° F, let it rest with foil tented but not touching over the bird for 20 minutes or so before carving to allow the juices to redistribute throughout the meat. The internal temperature will continue to rise by about 5° F after removing it from the smoker.

Here's dinner! Can't get any easier than that! ENjoy!

Smoked BBQ Ribs



I've never met anyone who said they didn't absolutely love ribs! I'm sure there's someone out there but I've never met them! Tender juicy ribs better than you get at your favorite BBQ restaurant are really very simple once you know the secret. Here it is!



Take ribs from the package, rinse in the sink and pat dry with paper towels. Grab the membrane (that thin piece of skin on the bone side), with a dry paper towel and rip it off. You might find one side works better than the other. I find if I start on the small rib end work a butter knife under an edge and tear it off. I think pulling towards the long rib end it comes off easier. This is absolutely necessary for tender juicy ribs.

Rub down well with your favorite rub. Here's mine:

Deejay's Infamous Dry Rib Rub

- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 6 tablespoons chili Powder
- 4 tablespoons Ruby Red Paprika
- 2 tablespoons cayenne pepper
- 2 tablespoons Ground Cumin
- 2 tablespoons ground Coriander
- 2 tablespoons garlic Salt
- 2 tablespoons onion powder
- 1 tablespoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon white pepper
- 1 tablespoon basil
- 1 tablespoon turbinado sugar or brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons finely diced dried red bell pepper

For more information about rubs download **Deejay's Book of Rubs** from the Herbs and Spice Downloads page.

Now to smoke! Used the 3-2-1 method for smoking ribs and it works every time! Some people like falling off the bone ribs and some like ribs with a little pull to the meat. The 3-2-1 method will give you falling off the bone ribs. Once you've made them the first time and know what to look for you can adjust the times to get just the right texture you love! Here it is in detail below:

The 3-2-1 Rib Smoking Method

The 3-2-1 smoked rib method is a good way to smoke ribs that come out perfect every time. It works well with country style spare ribs or the baby back style ribs. 3-2-1 is a kind of shorthand reminder of how long to do what.

The 3 stands for the first 3 hours that you smoke the ribs with nothing but your favorite rub and smoke.

The 2 stands for the second 2 hours. Remove the ribs, spray them with apple juice and wrap them quickly in foil trying not to lose too much heat.

The 1 stands for the last hour. Remove the foil and put them back on the smoker for 1 more hour. During this hour you can add a glaze or BBQ sauce if you wish.

That's it you should have falling off the bones ribs at this point. My family loves ribs and during the week I don't have time to smoke them. What I do is smoke several racks at a time but pull them at the end of step 2 and refrigerate or freeze them for later.



Ribs, Baked Beans and Tater Salad yummmmm!
And just look at that smoke ring!
ENjoy!

Smoking BBQ Brisket

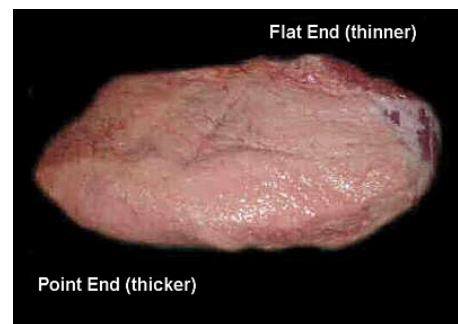


Smoking brisket is simple but time consuming – find the brisket your going to smoke, buy it, rub it if you choose, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate it. Get a least two good thermometers! Get you fuel source(s), get your chips, chunks or other smoke woods, tongs gloves and meat containers.

Buying a good brisket

If your anything like me the only brisket your ever purchased before you started smoking meat was a corned beef brisket for Saint Patrick's Day. Well that is a brisket but it's not what we're looking for right now, that is "corned" or brined. If you would like to make corned beef for brisket check out my [pastrami page](#). Right now we are looking for a fresh brisket because we are going to make smoke brisket. Buy a packer brisket (see picture below) that's about 8 to 10 pounds. A bigger brisket will also work, but it will take longer to smoke.

Look for a brisket that has a fat cap about 1/4 to 1/3" across the top. Try to find one that has a more rounded point, rather than a sharply pointed point and a thick layer of fat running all across the top.



Smoking the Brisket

The night before you plan to smoke brisket generously apply a good rub on your brisket, wrap it in clear wrap, and let it sit in the refrigerator overnight. This will allow the seasoning to work into the meat. You don't need a fancy rub just a bit of salt and pepper and maybe a little garlic powder will work fine. I think it's best to keep it simple and find out what You like best as you go along. For more information about rubs download [Deejay's Book of Rubs](#) from the Herbs and Spice Downloads page.

Okay your now your ready to smoke meat. Take your brisket out of the refrigerator set it on the counter and go start your fire. Once your fire has leveled off at around 230-250° F, put the brisket in the smoker, fat side up or fat side down it's up to you (*there are arguments about which is best all the time*) and leave it. I like to start with the fat cap up

and flip mine from time to time so I can spritz the top and bottom equally with apple juice – just my preference.

Always check temperature of the smoked brisket in the FLAT, not the point. The point will usually become tender before the flat, it's thinner! Don't be fooled by checking the wrong end! Every hour or so I like to spray the brisket with apple juice, apple juice and wine or my favorite marinate.

So how long does it take to smoke a brisket?

The brisket is ready for slicing when the internal temperature is between 185° F and ready for pulling when the internal temperature is about 200° to 205° F.

The test

When holding a slice of smoked brisket in you hand it should pull apart with a slight tug,. That's really good brisket! The *guideline* for brisket is about 1-1/2 hours per pound at 225°-250° F, but that is only a guide and rarely works out that way because of *the smoking plateau* (see below).

The Smoking Plateau - after many hours of smoking the brisket it has reached a temperature of around 151° F and gets stuck at that temperature - *sometimes for hours on end*. This is normal for briskets and butts so don't worry. Just wait it out - don't change anything! While this is happening the heat is slowly breaking down the tough connective tissues in the meat and making it tender and delicious! I've seen briskets stick at this temperature or slightly higher for up to 4 hours without change!

Once again the temperature will finally start to rise again very slowly over the next several hours. I like to smoke my brisket to around 160° -165° F internally without wrapping, then finish my brisket by wrapping it in multiple layers of *plastic wrap* then foil until the internal temperature is between 200° to 205° F.

About plastic wrap – I don't like to use Saran Wrap it has a strong odor. I buy the restaurant grade plastic wrap from BJ's or Sam's club. It has no odor and come in long, wide rolls of 3,000 feet. It'll seal your smoked meats so none of the juices can escape! These plastic wraps will take temperatures up to 250°F without melting but they will shrink around the meat holding in moisture – there is a reason chefs choose this stuff! The foil is just to catch anything that may have escaped any areas I didn't seal completely.

Next, leave it in the plastic wrap and foil and let it rest wrapped in towels in a cooler for a few hours. This really makes it juicy and tender. Many purists object to this procedure. After an hour or so you will have much more meat juice, "au jus" to add to your dipping sauce or just pour over the slices before serving!

Preparing to de-fat the Au Jus'

After a few hours in the cooler, open your brisket in a large bowl. Pour the smoked brisket juices into the bowl and throw the juice into the refrigerator for about 15 to 30 minutes or you can wait until morning. The fat and meat juices will separate. The juices will jell and the fat will rise to the top and become a hard orange crust. With a paper towel lightly wipe the fat off – it will stick to the paper towel if it's still soft or if you waited until morning you can lift off the harden fat to remove it.



Chilled Au jus with fat on the surface



Chilled fat sticking to paper towel

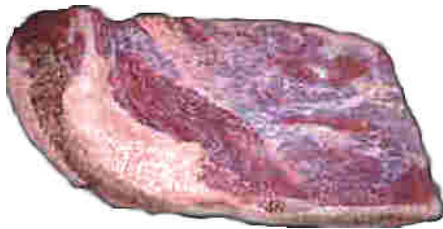


Tender succulent sliced Brisket ready to be served

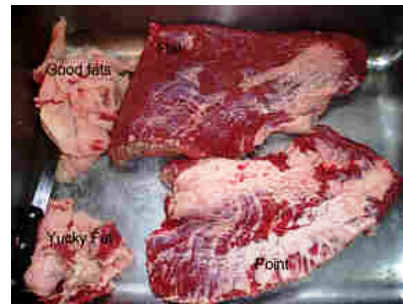
ENjoy!

BBQ Burnt Ends

My favorite part of the brisket – the burnt ends. To make burnt ends I get a good packer brisket, trim the fat down to about ¼ inch thick and separate the point from the flat. I keep the good fats for using in sausages and throw away the stringy gooey icky fats. See photos below.



This is a whole uncut 12 lb packer brisket



Separated into the flat and the point

Smoke each piece of meat as you did in the previous section with a few additions below:



Meat juices collected in the water pan to be used later

Place a suspended layer of foil in the water pan under the meat to catch the juices, add a few cups of water then smoke as usual with your favorite rub to about 180°F. Do not let the juices get dry add water as needed. This will be the base for you final sauce.

Remove the meat from the smoker and cut into small bite sized pieces. Use heat resistant gloves so you don't burn your fingers.



Point removed from the smoker



Cut into pieces Au Jus and sauce added

Mix some of your favorite BBQ sauce a little water and the meat drippings then mix with the meat and return to the smoker until the juice reduces down to a BBQ sauce/gravy. This could take up to another 4 hours but it's worth it!



Here is what burnt ends look like done! The taste is simply melt in your mouth amazing!

Now you can eat them like this. Most places serve them this way with cole slaw on the side and maybe a slice of corn bread....



BUT – I like to mix in thinly sliced onions in with the Burnt Ends and let them caramelize. Then serve them with your favorite sides.



When finished with caramelized onions it looks like this

ENjoy!

Making Fattys

Okay – you seen the term on every smoke site on the internet but just what IS a Fatty? A Fatty is a big thick breakfast sausage, sometimes called a chunk sausage. It's usually about 3-1/2 to 4 inches in diameter and about 7 or 8 inches long. The favorite of most smokers I know is the Jimmy Dean sausage! I personally love the hot ones best! Yummmmmmmmm!

You can simply unwrap the sausage and smoke it (1st photo)– remember this is pork so smoke it to an internal temperature of at least 160°F if you plan on eating it now – trust me you will eat at least one NOW! Throw several on the smoker they don't last long. If you plan on reheating it later for breakfast or a snack you can pull it off the smoker sooner.

You can roll it in you favorite rub (2nd and 3rd photo) or stuff it with you favorite veggies and cheese (4th photo).



Again there's no limit to what you can do with a fatty. Like breakfast sandwiches but always is a rush? Make them in advance and just throw one or two in the microwave on you way to work! Here are a few more of my favorite ways to eat fattys:

Stuffed With grated Cheddar Cheese, diced Peppers, Chopped Onions, chopped mushrooms and topped with eggs.



How about stuffed into a Pillsbury crescent roll, sprinkled with shredded apples, cheddar cheese, rolled and sprinkled with cinnamon? Or maybe a cooked fatty stuffed with cheddar, eggs, onions, mushrooms and red peppers and rolled into a biscuit dough?

Get the idea? You can do anything with a fatty!



ENjoy!

Making ABTs

What is an ABT? ABTs or Atomic Buffalo Turds or simply stuffed smoked jalapeño peppers. Might not sound overly exciting but man re they good!

There are many ways to make them but this is the way I like them best. It as with all things in the kitchen are limited only by your imagination!

First select fresh looking shiny unwrinkled Jalapeños. I always select least a dozen of the best looking Jalapeños I can find. Wash them thoroughly and pat dry with paper towels.

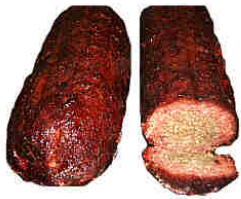
Next cut the tops off and either slice them in half length wise or core the seeds and white membrane as much as possible. The seeds and the white membrane are where the heat is and they are hotter cooked than raw so you be the judge! If you can handle them with the membrane go for it!



Most people I know like to keep them whole and just use an apple corer to clean out the seeds and membrane. I personally like to slice them down the middle – again this is entirely up to you.

Next prepare you stuffing. You can use almost anything Some people will use pineapple and cream cheese, sometimes I'll use chopped mushrooms, smoked chopped Jimmy Dean Sausage (known as a fatty in smoking circles), corn bread and cream cheese. Whatever you like! For this example I will to use a Fatty and cream cheese.

Set the cream cheese on the counter for at least an hour so it is soft and easy to mix.



Smoked Fatty



Chopped Fatty



Cream Cheese, Peppers, Fatty



Mixed Ingredients

Then

Finely chop the sausage or bacon, or mushrooms or anything you want in the stuffing and mix until well blended.

Next fill the empty Jalapeños with the mixture using a butter knife, spoon or pastry bag (whatever works for you) and smooth it off so it looks pretty.



Then add bacon. Here again it's up to you – I cut bacon strips in half and lay them on top of the Jalapeños like an open faced sandwich, where others completely wrap the pepper in bacon as you can see below.

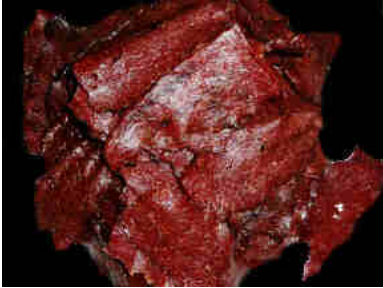


Now all that's left is to smoke them! They are very forgiving so if your smoking a butt that's going to be smoked low and slow or a chicken that's high and fast throw them in. There done when the bacon is to your liking!



ENjoy!

Basic Jerky



While most of the world is speeding toward the future trying to find new ways to do things, bigger, better, and faster some of us are looking to the past to develop the staple of days gone by – Jerky. I can't help but think that the ole Cowboys of the wild west, or the Native American Indians who taught them the process must be thinking *"the people in the future are strange, they take a nice juicy piece of meat and dry it when they can eat it fresh!"*

What is Jerky? Jerky is simply strips of lean meat, cured, smoked and flavored into a chewy, mouth watering, strip of dried meat. It can be made from beef, turkey, venison, moose, elk, antelope, bear, rabbit or just about any other meat.

NOTE: I have never made jerky from pork and don't recommend it. I'm more than leery about potential problems with raw pork so I will not use it for jerky or any other meat products that are not cooked.

When making jerky use only lean meats because the fat in meat goes bad quickly and will cause your jerky to spoil a lot faster than meat with no fat. When using beef, I recommend using the leaner cuts. Wild game meats are usually lean but still trim off all of the fat and membrane that you can as you cut up the meat. Some meats are tougher than others but hey this is jerky!

Sliced Beef Jerky

you could use:

- Top Round (probably the best cut)
- Eye of the round
- Bottom Round
- Flank Steak
- Brisket (well trimmed)
- Sirloin Tip
- Sirloin top butt

When making jerky you will lose about 3/4 of the weight from water loss. So for about 2 pounds of meat you'll get about 1/2 pound of jerky when you're done, so don't be surprised by the shrinkage.

Once you have your meat chill it until stiff (not frozen) in the freezer. This will make it easier to trim or slice. Once the meat is trimmed slice the meat across the grain into 1/4" inch thick. If you cut it with the grain you will have a lot of very tasty dental floss!

Mix ingredients for marinade in a bowl and let stand while you are cutting the meat. Then place meat into the bowl of marinade, secure lid and let stand about 30 minutes. Shake bowl and turn bowl every few minutes to cover all pieces equally. Drain in sieve or colander. Place on trays and dehydrate.

Basic Marinade

This is a basic marinade. I like to use a combination of soy sauce and brown sugar sweetened to taste. Add crushed red pepper, chili pepper, cayenne pepper, or jalapeno pepper if you like it hot. You can add garlic powder, onion powder, Cajun spice or any spices you like - to taste. Mix the ingredients together and taste it. This is what your jerky will taste like once dried so taste your marinade before you use it.

5 lbs. thinly Sliced meat
2 tablespoons Morton's Tender Quick salt
1/2 lb brown sugar
3 cups soy sauce
Spices of your choosing
1/2 cup liquid smoke (if you don't have a smoker)

Marinate the meat for 20 to 30 minutes. Thicker cuts of meat will need to marinate a lot longer. It is important that the meat is marinated completely. The meat will turn brown when it has absorbed the marinade. The meat can sit in the marinade overnight if you wish.

Drying Meat

My oven has very low settings so I do jerky in the oven by lining my racks with aluminum foil and laying the meat on the foil. Cook at 150 °F for the first 30 minutes turn the strips over then continue cooking at 170°F for another 2 hours and 30 minutes. Turn the strips at least twice and pat with a dry paper towels to remove any moisture you see. Melted fats will look like shiny spots wipe it off!

Place one layer of meat on each rack or tray. If you like slightly thicker slices, then increase the drying time accordingly. Store in clean jars with tight lid, plastic Ziploc bags or vacuum seal if you plan to keep it for more than a week.

Ground Meat Jerky Using a Jerky Shooter or Jerky Gun

Jerky can also be made from lean ground meat. Hamburger that is 97% lean can be used to make jerky. You can roll it out on a Teflon cutting sheet and cut it into strips or buy a Jerky Gun or Jerky Shooter which is used to squeeze out thin strips of meat for Jerky.



Jerky Shooter



Jerky Gun

I was a bit skeptical about ground meat jerky at first but I got a Jerky shooter and gave it a try. It's not bad! You can whip out a lot of Jerky in short order and at the price of hamburger vs steak! The Jerky you buy in the store is more than likely made this way so this isn't anything new. You can use any of the same recipes but do not use more than 1/3 cup of liquid jerky mix for every 1.5 to 2 pounds of ground meat.

5 lbs. lean ground meat
2 tablespoons Morton's Tender Quick salt
1/3 tbsp. coarse ground black pepper
1/3 tbsp. garlic salt or powder
2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
Other spices to taste

For more recipes check the Smoking Download section!

ENjoy!

Beef Bacon or Jerky Formed from Ground Beef

- You can use any of the spices you use for sliced meat jerky or bacon but add 1/2 oz of water per pound of meat and;

A technique I've learned that makes it so much easier is to form the meat in square disposable foil pans lined with plastic wrap about 9 x 9 size.

This recipe works for either Jerky or formed bacon with just a minor change *

2.5 lbs lean ground beef
1/2 teaspoons onion powder
1/2 teaspoons garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon paprika
1/4 teaspoon Jalapeño pepper for bite
1 teaspoon brown sugar
1/6 cup powdered milk
1 packet Knox gelatin
5/8 teaspoon Prague Powder #1

Mix dry ingredients then add *2/3 cup water if making Bacon
or *1/3 cup water and 1/3 cup soy sauce if making Jerky

1) Mix your spices water and cure (according to manufactures directions based on weight).

2) Line the pan with plastic wrap and form it in a square tin foil loaf pan (about 2 inches thick), press it down firmly and let it sit covered in the fridge overnight.

3) Turn pan upside down and gently give the plastic wrap a tug to remove the meat. Place the meat on smoke screens.



4) Get the smoker temperature to 130°F and lightly smoke for 1 hour or until meat feels dry with the damper fully open.

5) Raise the smoker temperature to 150 -160°F - damper 1/2 full - smoke 2-3 hours or until meat reaches 140°F.

6) Finally raise smoker temperature to 170-180°F - no smoke - damper closed until meats internal temperature reaches 155°F degrees.

7) Refrigerate overnight.

8) Slice meat thin and lightly smoke slices for about 2 hours or until desired texture is achieved.



You can make tons of jerky at a time this way and it's very easy to do!

ENjoy!

Smoked Meal loaf (Basic)

3 lbs. Hamburger
1 large Finely Chopped Onion
Garlic or Garlic Powder
Cajun Spice
2 Eggs
1 / 2 Pack Ritz Crackers powdered
1 / 2 cup Heinz Ketchup
1 / 2 cup Yellow Mustard
1 or 2 cups High Temperature Cheese
Salt and Pepper to taste



Line a loaf pan with tin foil.

Mix all ingredients together well.

Press meat mixture tightly into loaf pan. Paint top with ketchup or tomato gravy.

Remove loaf and sprinkle with you favorite rub all over.

Smoke for about 3 hours at 225°F to 250°F or until internal temperature of 160°F is reached. Spray with apple juice every hour or so.

Add different spices every smoke – see what you like best!

ENjoy!

Deejay's Stuffed Bell Peppers

6 blocky bell peppers red or green (you want them to be able to stand up in the smoker)
3 pounds of ground beef 80 to 85%
1 large onion diced fine
1 egg
1 cup of uncooked rice or 1/2 pack of Ritz crackers
1/2 cup yellow mustard
1/2 cup ketchup
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon Cajun spice
1/2 teaspoon onion powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup water

Wash the peppers and slice the top off about 1 inch from the top. Pop our stem trying not to break the top. Cut out seeds and membrane. Rinse out with water. Tuck top back onto pepper so they don't get mixed up.

Mix it all ingredients together well and stuff into corners of pepper first then finish filling pepper making a little mount on top. Screw top back on and line up the pepper so it looks whole again with a little ball of meat popping out the whole - this help hold the top on. Squirt a little dollop of ketchup on the meat that sticks out the stem whole to keep it from drying out.



Put in a shallow pan and wrap foil around the bottom of the peppers so they don't fall down. Stick in 250°F smoker and smoke until pepper is tender but not mushy. If smoking alone you can crank it up to 350°F if you want to.

Hint - when peppers are on sale get a bunch and make them ahead. Put them in sandwich size bags, freeze them and pull them out one at a time as you gets the urge to eat them or stick one in your pocket for lunch at work. They also nuke well if you open the bag a tiny bit from lunches at work

ENjoy!

Pizza and Calzones

The Dough

3 cups bread flour
2 cups semolina flour
9 ounces luke warm water
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon instant yeast
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1 teaspoon basil (optional)
2 teaspoons grated Asiago cheese (optional)



- Mix the water, salt, and yeast in a bowl.
- Wait about five minutes to activate the yeast.
- Mix the flour and the water mixture until they form a lumpy ball.
- Add the olive oil and knead dough for about 5 minutes.
- Cut into two equal parts and form dough into balls.

Best if used after refrigerated for 24 hours.

Making the pizza or Calzone

- Roll out the dough and let sit for a few minutes allowing the dough to warm to room temperature.
- Rub the dough with a little olive oil then sprinkle with garlic powder, oregano, and basil.
- Add precooked meat toppings (except bacon that goes on top) and hard cheeses before the sauce. This will allow the meats cheeses and spices to cook into the *sauce - giving it a more finished flavor.
- Add soft cheeses then remaining toppings.
- Pizza normally has a tomato sauce where calzones normally have a cheese sauce. The sauce is up to you.
- When stuffing a calzone fill only half the circle with toppings because the other half will be folded over and turned to complete the shell.
- Smoke the pizza or calzones until the crust is light and crispy. Select wood that will complement the meats used in your pizza or calzone.

I won't go into pizza sauce everyone has their favorite sauce.

Calzone Cheese Sauce

Calzone cheese sauce starts with ricotta cheese. Then you can add whatever cheese you like Parmesan, Romano, Asiago, even Cheddar cheese! Start with a small container of ricotta, add a teaspoon or so of your other favorite cheeses, basil, oregano and a pinch of salt then mix in your meats or other stuffings keeping the balance of about half cheese sauce and half other stuffings.

Roll dough into a small circle about 5 inches in diameter. Spoon mixture onto half of the circle leaving about 1 inch empty of filling. Fold over then starting at one end fold a piece a dough about the size of a quarter over towards the center of the calzone overlapping as you go.

ENjoy!

Nuts and Snacks

Hot and Spicy Smoked Nuts

2 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted (I prefer Blue Bonnet Margarine)
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1/4 teaspoon ground red pepper
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 cups of your favorite nuts

1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1 tablespoon chili powder

Mix everything but the nuts and chili powder in a bowl. When it's mixed well add nuts coating completely. Then add chili powder. Put in tin foil pan and smoke for about 30 minutes. Stir them up every 10 minutes or so.

Glazed Spiced Smoked Nuts Recipe

1/3 cup sugar
1/4 unsalted butter or margarine (I prefer Blue Bonnet Margarine)
1/4 cup fresh orange juice (strained)
1 1/2 teaspoon salt
1 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground mace

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 pound unsalted mixed nuts

Cook sugar, butter, orange juice, salt, cinnamon, cayenne and mace in heavy skillet over low heat until butter melts and sugar is dissolved.

Increase heat to medium. Add nuts and toss until completely coated. Spread in single layer on a tin foil pan lightly coated with a non-stick spray. Smoke for 30 minutes stirring every 10 minutes. Then cook without smoke for another 30 minutes. Move nuts to sheet of tin foil to cool.

Hot And Spicy Smoked Cajun Nut Mix

1/4 cup Butter or margarine (I prefer Blue Bonnet Margarine)
1 teaspoon Salt
1 teaspoon Paprika
1 teaspoon Red cayenne pepper (or to taste)
1 teaspoon Garlic powder
1 teaspoon Black pepper
1 teaspoon White pepper
8 ounces pistachios

1 teaspoon Onion powder
8 ounces Walnuts
4 ounces almonds, Whole

Again you can use any combination of nuts you chose and it will be great!

Hot & Smokey Crisp-x Mix

1 stick Blue Bonnet Margarine or butter
2 tablespoons Worcestershire
1 1/2 teaspoons seasoned salt
1 teaspoon Garlic Powder
1 teaspoon Onion Powder
1 teaspoon Cajun Spice
1 tablespoon Red Pepper Sauce
1 Tablespoon Ruby Red Paprika
1 Box Crisp-x cereal
1 lb bag Walnuts
1 lb bag Pecans
1 lb bag Pistachios
1 lb bag Unsalted Peanuts
1 lb bag Pecans



Use any combination of Unsalted nuts the more the merrier

Add cheese flavored crackers and or pretzels if you wish its all great stuff!

