**Dry brining vs. wet brining**

Dry brining vs. wet brining is the theme of our article today.  We will be going through the ins and outs of each so you got the information to choose your champ.

As we all know, salt increase the flavour as well as preserve meat. Using salt is a very old technique especially for storing meat. Many regions have been named for it, numerous roads have been made to transport it, and several battles have been fought to protect it.

Moreover, salt is one of the basic needs of life. According to Wikipedia (and scientists), sodium helps to improve our nervous system by generating nerve impulses and balancing electrolytes of our body, among other things. Most importantly, you require salt to stay fit.

Yes, the majority of us most likely get adequate salt in our diets to stay away from risk, but why take chances? Let’s witness how this vital mineral can improve the taste of our barbecue while keeping us alive and healthy!

**What is brining**

As I mentioned earlier, brining meat or fish is an ancient technique of food preservation. Before the modern era, brined or salt-preserved fishes or meats were taken on long sea expeditions and military campaigns as there was no refrigeration system available then. Nonetheless, in the present day, brining comes up with a new purpose.

Surprisingly, nowadays brining has turned out to be a fantastic cooking method that puts a huge impact on the overall quality of your food. And thankfully, it’s very simple. By adding lesser quantities of salt mixed with other spices, brining can make the meat taste awesome.

Actually, brine is a cooking term used for salty water that preserves and add extra flavour to different kinds of foods. For the desired result, the only salt can be used to brine foods without adding water.

**Science behind brining**

The art behind brining is very simple. Brining is performed by submerging meats in a liquid with a higher concentration of salt. When you keep salt and meat together, the salt went inside the center of the meat.

In other words, brining is basically adding salt on meat or keeping meat down into salty water and allowing that saltwater to go through some natural processes. The good thing about this amazing process is that you can add other herbs, spices, flavourings, etc. with the salt to make the food taste more delicious.

**Reason behind brining**

In one sentence I can say, brining meat improves the flavour as well as increases the moisture intensity inside meat or fish. During the cooking time, moisture goes out of the food. As a result, the meat becomes more dried and hard to eat once it is cooked.

But thankfully, brined piece of meats have extra moisture inside and therefore ends up more juicy and moist than regular meat. Moreover, in early days, brine techniques are used to preserve food from turning into rotten waste as there were no refrigerators available.

However, in our times, cooking experts have discovered that brined meat adds extra taste into the meat and it tastes extraordinary!

**Wet brining vs. dry brining**

There are mainly two types of brining available. One type is Wet brine while another type is dry brine. Some people prefer dry while some people like wet.

In the following section of the article, I will be discussing what actually wet and dry brine is, the process of making both types of brining, their pros and cons. So, you can thoroughly understand the concept of both types of brining and choose the best for you.

**Dry brining**

The basic idea of dry brining is to rub the piece of meat with a mixture of **salt** and **spices** before cooking it. Behind this easy process lies a handy formula which is master at transforming the tenderness and flavour of your barbecued delicious dishes.

In the case of **dry brining**, which is accomplished by using dry components only, you don’t need to place the meat in the refrigerator for a whole night, or perhaps more, nor the possibility of watering down or washing away its essence. As a result, the inner moisture of the meat remains unchanged, as well as its mouth-watering taste. This process makes any skin - such as chicken skin perfectly appetizing and crisper indeed.

**How dry brining Works**

The dry brining principle is that when an external coating of salt along with spices (optional) is formed, these covering materials infiltrate the fibres of the meat. When you start cooking the meat, it expels its moisture in the direction of the external surface and accumulates on the outside layer of meat. As the cooking progress, some of the moisture again goes into the fibre.

This system is also known as “push and pull”. These reactions improve the taste of the meat with the essence of salt and spices, but without adulterating its natural taste. With the dry brining technique, you can prepare the meat in a few minutes before cooking and you are ready to go.

**The procedure of dry brining**

The size and shape of the meat matters when you dry brine it. A bulkier and rounder thick-cut will take more time than a longer, wider, but thinner cut. So a chuck roast requires less time than an equally sized rump roast. A properly cut chicken or turkey will take less time than a whole turkey or chicken. Regulate your timing for brining accordingly.

Don’t worry. Here’s some information about how long you will need to dry brine different cuts of meat before cooking.

Large sizes – More than 8 lbs- 48 to72 hours.  
 Medium sizes – 3 to 8 pounds (entire chicken) – 24 to 36 hours.

Smaller sizes: ½ to 2 ½ lbs (breasts, steaks, roasts) – 12 to24 hours

Note: you can also keep your dry brined meat longer in the brined state. The given times above are minimums to assist you to ensure perfection. As long as you applied adequate salt and spices, and the meat piece was not rotten before dry brining, it will keep the meat safer.

Now let’s move to step by step procedure of dry brining-

**Step 01:** Begin with a piece of meat that has not been previously brined, pre-salted or processed in any other way. Simply you can take raw meat.

**Step 02:** Ensure that the meat is dry. If not, use a towel or piece of cloth to wipe excess wetness from the meat surface.

**Step 03:** Remove any unwanted organs, bones and the neck if they were placed into the cavity.

**Step 04:** Mix your salt of choice and any other flavour you are using into a small bowl. Remember, don’t combine any sort of liquid material with this mixture.

**Step 05:** Next, for one lb of meat, mix half teaspoon salt and spices or herbs mixture that you had prepared earlier. Massage the mixture thoroughly all over the meat.

**Step 06:** Now, keep this meat into the refrigerator to complete the dry brining process. Your minimum brining time should be 1 hour per pound of meat. You can keep it longer for better result.

**Why choose dry brine**

Dry brine technique saves your time as it cooks faster. Moreover, it is a very simple process and very easy to learn. The dry brining process also cost little. If you want to make the thanksgiving dish more delicious with less time you should go for this process.

**Dry Brine pros**

* Easier to do and takes less time. It is as straightforward as sprinkling salt on the food and inserting it in the refrigerator for a few hours.
* Put in tenderness and moisture to meat for catering.
* Less space and salt required.
* You can add supplementary spices or herbs to the salt for further flavour.
* It is extremely easy to get a fine browned and crispy chicken or turkey skin using dry brine.
* For rooster, it creates a much more crunchy skin. Moreover, dry brining makes the skin softer.
* Better resistance to unintentional overcooking.

**Dry Brine Cons**

* Difficult to ensure that the salt and spices get into all part of the meat.
* Does not infiltrate as consistently as a wet brine does.
* There is a probability of over-salting your meat if you overdo it.
* The dry brine process cannot be hurried. If you start rushed with the procedure it may come out dry.

**Wet brining**

Wet brining is the method that will result in the juiciest meat ever! It is a procedure involving plenty of water and cups of salt. Moreover, wet brining adds extra moisture to your foods especially meats. This technique is called wet brine because water or other liquid are used in the process.

Apart from breaking down proteins, a wet brine method lock in additional water in the muscle fibres of meats, which further decreases the amount of moisture lost at the time of cooking. In a sentence, we can say, wet brining is the system of submerging meat in a saltwater solution.

What is more, you can include things other than salt for more taste, but to get going all you need is H2O (water) and NaCl (sodium chloride or salt).

**How wet brining Works**

Here, I will discuss what happens when you brine food such as meat. If you know what's going on, it will be easier to adapt the system according to your taste or employ it to a new circumstance.

There are two main natural processes go on while wet brining occurs:

* **Diffusion**. This is while particles shift from an area of higher concentration to a region of lower concentration. For instance, when you are wet brining a chicken, the brine mixture got more salt in it than the chicken. As a result, the salt is absorbed by the chicken.
* **Osmosis**. Osmosis happens when water (or other liquid) goes through a membrane from one place that has more water to another area that has less water. When you wet brine meat or fish, you are simply creating just that above-mentioned condition of osmosis.

Everything is about keeping things in balance! Isn’t it?

Along with diffusion and osmosis, there's another phenomenon happen when you wet brine meat. When the salty water mixture goes inside the flesh, it compels some of the proteins molecules to loosen. Then, when you steam the meat, these proteins interact with each other by creating one kind of guard that keeps the moisture stay inside.

**The procedure of wet brining**

The percentage of salt to water is the most significant part of the wet brine process. Generally, I would suggest you add 1 cup of salt for each gallon of water. A 10 to 12 lbs meat such as turkey will require 2 gallons of water with 2 cup salt to completely immerse the meat.

Garlic, bay leaves, peppercorns, and herbs are commonly used items in wet brines, too. You can also use 1/4 cup of sugar for every cup of salt. And most importantly, don’t forget to boil these selected ingredients to get the most out of them.

You have to wet brine meat for a long time to let the salty solution properly reach the deepest part of the meat. But be aware! Never wet brine meat for too long as it can result in tasteless soggy meat.

Now let’s discuss the process of wet brining -

**Step 01:** Take a fresh, non-reactive large container for the meat you are wet brining. Carefully set the meat into the pot and load with liquid until the meat is completely sunk. You may have to hold the meat underwater with a heavy object placing over it to keep it submerged.

**Step 02:** In this step, you need to measure water. To do so, take out the meat from the liquid and calculate the volume. If you are wet brining a whole turkey or chicken, add 1-3 cups of liquid, depending on the size of the bird.

**Step 03:** Use one cup of salt per gallon of liquid. Not working with that? Just relax! 1 tablespoon of salt per cup of liquid provides you with a similar ratio. Now, if you’re using kosher salt, you can’t apply the above ratio here. In that case, you need to add ten ounces of kosher salt to one gallon of liquid.

**Step 04:** After adding salt, now you can put in any extra flavourings and ingredients into your liquid solution. I would suggest you add sugar as it helps the Maillard reaction, which is what makes browning for the time of cooking.

**Step 05:** seal the top of the container with the lid and keep it in the fridge to let it cold. Now it’s waiting time!

**Step 06:** After an adequate amount of time take out the meat from the solution. You can discard the brine solution; it’s no good for anything after brining. Thoroughly wash the meat under normal water to eradicate salt and seasonings from the surface. Failure to do so will result in a salty meal!

**Why choose wet brine**

If you want juicer and soft meat for your special dish that you should wet brine your meat. It not only makes the meat tastier but also healthy for our body. Moreover, it is perfect for beef or chicken curry.

**Wet Brine Pros**

* Wet brine method makes the meat more juicer than dry brine
* All parts of the meat are equally brined.
* It makes the meat feels very soft your mouth.
* Wet brine can mask the objectionable flavour, especially bitterness, and balance out too much sourness or sweetness.

**Wet Brine Cons**

* The Wet brining process needs more equipment and this technique is not as simple as the dry brine.
* Wet brining takes more space.
* If you wet brine meat for a too long time, you may get tasteless juicy meat.
* It takes more cooking time.

**The winner**

Frankly speaking, it is very hard to declare a winner as both wet brine and dry brine are applied for two different types of purpose. The wet brine provides juicier meat for your curry while dry brine is better for making grilled meat.

However, both brining methods have their benefits and drawbacks. If you make your mind up to wet brine meat, you need a large segment of your fridge to house a huge container full of saltwater and raw meat. Or, if you want to dry brine meat, you still need to give up some space but for a small quantity of time.

But, if you consider time, space and simplicity then I would suggest you go for dry brine because wet brine needs more space and is not a straight-forward brining technique. And if you are brining meat for business purpose then dry brining should be your ultimate choice.

**Final verdict,**

Preparing brine is simple however needs to wait for a while to allow the salt to do its work. With a little bit of space and planning, soft and moist meat can be achieved easily.

After all, the selection to dry brine vs. wet brine method depends on how much room you can allot, how much time you have to complete the procedure, and most importantly, just how much effort you are willing to give to make a well-cooked delicious dish.