

Perfect Oven-Baked Crumbly Bacon

This technique produces exceptionally crisp, crumbly bacon with a honeycomb-like texture. The two-phase cooking method ensures thorough fat rendering while maintaining structural integrity, resulting in bacon that shatters pleasingly when bitten rather than bending.

Ingredients

Thick-cut, dry-cured bacon 1 lb. Brown sugar 1 Tbsp. (optional)
Ground black pepper . . . ¼ tsp. (optional)

Directions

Unwrap **bacon** and refrigerate uncovered for *2-4 hours* — Preheat oven to 350°F — Line half-sheet pan with aluminum foil (optional) — Place wire rack on baking sheet

1. Remove **bacon** from refrigerator and allow to reach approximately 60°F (slightly below room temperature), about *15-20 minutes*.
2. Pat **bacon** dry with paper towels to remove excess moisture. If using, lightly sprinkle with **black pepper** or **brown sugar**.
3. Arrange **bacon** strips perpendicular to the wire grid of the cooling rack, maintaining ¼" to ½" spacing between strips to promote proper air circulation.
4. Place baking sheet with **bacon** on the middle rack of a fully preheated oven. Cook at 350°F for *15 minutes* to initiate fat rendering.
5. Reduce oven temperature to 325°F and continue cooking for *10-15 minutes*, until **bacon** develops a mahogany color with small bubbles throughout the meat portions.
6. Remove **bacon** from oven when it appears slightly less done than desired. It should bend slightly but not immediately break when lifted at one end.
7. Transfer **bacon** to a fresh wire rack (not paper towels) and allow to rest for *3-5 minutes* in a low-humidity environment.
8. Once cooled slightly, break or cut **bacon** into desired lengths and serve immediately.

Equipment Required

- Half-sheet (18" × 13") heavy-gauge aluminum baking sheet
- 304 stainless steel wire cooling rack with grid pattern
- Aluminum foil (optional, for easier cleanup)
- Paper towels
- Oven thermometer
- Kitchen tongs
- Timer
- Cutting board and knife (optional, for portioning)

Mise en Place

- Refrigerate **bacon** unwrapped for *2-4 hours* before cooking to create a pellicle
- Verify oven temperature with thermometer before cooking
- Allow *10 minutes* of oven stabilization after reaching temperature
- Have all equipment ready before removing **bacon** from refrigerator
- Prepare a fresh wire rack for the cooling phase

Ingredient Tips

- Select center-cut bacon with 60-70% visual fat distribution for optimal results
- Thickness should be approximately 1/8" to 3/16" thick
- Artisanal or butcher-shop bacon often provides superior results compared to mass-market alternatives
- For a subtle flavor variation, try applewood or hickory-smoked varieties
- If adding **brown sugar**, apply very lightly to avoid burning

Preparation Tips

- Position bacon strips perpendicular to wire grid for optimal support
- The transition from perfect to overdone occurs rapidly in the final *2-3 minutes*
- Visual cues for completion: mahogany color, translucent fat, small bubbles in meat
- If bacon bends slightly but doesn't immediately break when lifted, it's ready
- For maximum crispness, avoid all contact between strips when arranging on rack

Make Ahead & Storage

- Best served immediately after the *3-5 minute* resting period
- Can be stored in refrigerator for up to *4 days* in airtight container
- To reheat, place on wire rack in *325°F* oven for *3-5 minutes*
- Avoid microwave reheating, which will compromise the crisp texture
- For meal prep, partially cook bacon for *15 minutes*, cool, refrigerate, and finish cooking later

Serving Suggestions

- Ideal as a standalone breakfast side
- Crumble into salads for textural contrast
- Use as a topping for baked potatoes or creamy soups
- Incorporate into sandwiches or burgers
- Pair with maple syrup or honey for a sweet-savory combination