

CFG: Salts and Brines

Jeff's AppBooks Network

... Compartmentalizing Anthologies ...

Salt

*** for all references to salt - assume non-iodized pickling salt.

*** You can substitute fancy sea salts or similar artisanal salts if you wish.

*** Be very careful when using / discussing 'pink salt'. Artisanal salts are a thing now, many of them are pink and are called pink salt. In the realm of curing food products pink salt or curing salt is a high nitrate salt that is used in minuscule quantities to kill botulism. It is poisonous in larger doses. It is pink.

*** Never brine in a metal container - you will never get the smell out - always brine in plastic bags or buckets.

Hard Packed

Hard packing with salt is as literal as it sounds. Meat, particularly fish, is packed between generous layers of salt. The container is set at a slight incline to allow all the moisture that is drawn out to drain off. This produces a 'hard' dry salted product that will keep a long time.

100% Pickle (Brine or Brining)

Many recipes call for '100% pickle' which is a salt brine solution strong enough to float a potato.

This is accomplished as literally as you can imagine. Fill a container with the volume of brine needed, add a potato and watch it sink. Now stir in salt until the potato floats.

Some recipes call for a brine that will float an egg. Google says it takes 3 tablespoons of salt in a cup of water to float an egg ... or roughly 5:1 (there are 16 tablespoons in a cup). Google didn't say about a potato.

Other recipes 'back this up' with many popular recipes using 2 quarts of water and 2 cups of salt or 4 cups of salt in a gallon of water ... which is 4:1 (4 cups in a quart, 4 quarts in a gallon).

Corning or Corned

A 'cor' or 'corn' was an old word to describe the size of a kernel of something. In this case salt, it refers to a cheap form of salt similar to rock salt. Corned meat or corned beef was thus meat that was salted with the cheapest salt available.

Corning is actually a brining process, not a hard packing process.

Corned beef is literally beef (usually brisket) soaked in 100% pickle. A weight is used to keep it under the brine.

Many recipes say to brine the beef for a week to 2 weeks and then cook. This gives the flavour but limits the salt absorption so the beef does not have to be soaked in fresh water before cooking.

Many recipes use brown sugar, some as strong as salt (2 cups salt, 2 cups brown sugar in 2 quarts of water). Others use some or many spices including :

Pickling Spice

- mustard seeds
- coriander seeds
- all spice
- bay leaves
- cloves
- pepper corns

*sometimes red chili

Other

- thyme or savory
- juniper berries
- cumin
- ginger
- garlic
- cinnamon sticks
- cardamom

This can be done with either belly or shoulder meat.

Dry Rub per 5 lbs of meat

- 2/3 cup of salt
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/2 cup brown sugar (packed)
- 1 tsp / 5 lbs of Cure #1 (Sodium Nitrate)

Wet Rub per 5 lbs of meat

- 2 tablespoons of molasses
- 8 tablespoons of maple syrup

Rind off (no skin), rinse and pat dry. Belly cuts are about the right thickness. Shoulders generally need to be boned out and split in half. The top half is often more fatty and makes better bacon. Some peeps use the bottom half as leaner bacon, some peeps use it as a roast.

- rub the WET rub in really well. All sides, tops, bottoms, the whole 9 yards. This will allow the dry rub to stick better.
- rub in all the cracked black pepper you want
- pack on the DRY rub, be generous, make sure to get the ends, sides, tops and bottoms.
- Seal in zip lock bags if you like. Brine in fridge for a week, 7 to 10 days, until meat is firm. Turn them each day.
- Rinse well. Pat dry. Air dry overnight for 12 to 24 hrs. The drier the better it takes the smoke.
- COLD smoke to 140-150° F. Don't let the smoker go above 175° F.

Rinella's Bear Bacon

- 3 lbs bear meat (off rump, good fat : meat ratio, looks like bacon)
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 cups coarse salt
- 1 teaspoon of pink salt #1

→ add enough maple syrup to bind dry ingredients

→ coat meat in 'brine rub', seal in plastic bag (vacuum bag) and brine in fridge

- flip every day, salt pulls moisture out, firming up bacon
- flip every day, poking until as firm as desired (indicates salt level)
- typically 5 days, longer = saltier

→ rinse really well, pat dry, allow to dry (in fridge) until tacky (pellicle forms)

→ smoke in smoker until 150°F in center (will look darker than normal bacon)

→ done, slice and freeze / cook normally as if bacon b/c it is

Old School Salt Pork or Beef a.k.a Corned Beef

- Start with a container, put a generous layer of salt in the bottom.
- Pack in a layer of roughly 1 lb pork pieces.
* *the size 1 lb derives from a soldier's ration for 1 day*
- Put a generous layer of salt.
- Repeat until the container is almost full.
- Top off container with 100% pickle.
- Make sure there is room at the top for a weight (like a plate) that will create several inches (fingers) of brine to prevent air getting to the meat. The deeper this is the less meat there is but the less often you have to check for evaporation.
- Top up evaporation with 100% pickle.

This will keep for months or years in a cool spot.

Adding a bit of salt peter (potassium nitrate) lengthens this even more but some say the taste is not as good.

Pork is white to begin with so the natural grey color of salt pork is just that, natural.

Beef and other red meats will also grey alot, it's a reaction with the iron in the blood or some such. Salt peter (or other nitrate salts) prevents or reduces this (depending on amounts) and produces the rich red / pink color of corned beef.

*** Products preserved in this way must be soaked overnight in fresh water, with several water changes, to remove enough salt to be edible.

Salt Meat / Fish, Beans and Onions

Soak out the beans. Add the salt meat / fish and onions. Cook until beans are tender. Makes excellent soup.

Swap out beans for potatoes and make a simple soup / stew.

Swap out beans for rice and make excellent rice.

Rinella's Corned Elk

Rinella prefers shoulder meat as wild game has less desired brisket as compared to domestic animals

→ 4-5 lbs of shoulder meat, bone in, connective tissue in etc ... gives a gelatinous finished product

→ 2 cups coarse salt

→ 1/2 cup sugar

→ pink salt #1

→ pickling spice

→ boil and chill brine to dissolve salt and sugar

→ brine meat in fridge for 4-5 days

→ rinse

Slow cook for 4-6 hrs or pressure cook at 10 PSI for 45 minutes.

Old School Ham - Wet Cure

*** 50% pickle + pink curing salt (1 teaspoon per lb of meat)

So a 10 lb 'ham' needs 6 quarts of water (1.5 gal), 3 cups of salt and 2-3 tablespoons of curing salt + spices + 2-3 cups brown sugar

Score the skin and fat but not the meat.

Brine in fridge for 1 day per 2 lbs, then smoke, then freeze.

Rinella Old School

→ Wet Cure as above

→ salt, brown sugar, yellow mustard seeds, juniper berries, black pepper corn, bay leaves, garlic

→ Boil and chill brine

→ submerge ham with plate

→ stab lots or inject brine, to the bone, every day - meat will turn brown from salt but pink salt will conserve color and kill botulism

→ brine in the fridge 1 day / 2 lbs

→ rinse, pat dry, hang or place on rack in smoker

→ smoke at 180 - 220 for 6-12 hrs

→ check temp, at bone, 150 for deer, 160+ for bear or pork b/c of trichinosis

Rinella Thanks Giving Black Bear Ham

→ 1 gal water, 1.5 cups salt, 2 cups brown sugar - no spices - dry rub them while smoking

→ brine for a couple up to 10 days

Old School Country Ham - Dry Cure

4:1 salt to sugar (4 lbs salt, 1 lb brown sugar or multiples there of) + spices (red and black pepper, paprika ...)

Dry Cure (above) is 10:1 ... 5 lbs of cure is good for 50 lbs of green (fresh) meat.

If you want pink curing salt, add it at 1 teaspoon per lb of green meat to the cure and mix well.

Add a little water to the cure to get it to stick to the outside of the ham.

Use wax-LESS paper so moisture escapes.

If bone-in ... loosen meat around bone as deep as possible and pack well with cure. A typical ham, if it spoils, spoils at the joints deep in the ham.

Wrap in waxless paper, hang in ham-sock.

Hang (cure) for 2 days per lb.

Unwrap, brush off cure, hang in new sock without paper. If you smoke it, now's the time. COLD SMOKE 12-24 hrs.

Hang to age - 6 to 9 months is normal.

Old School Salt Beans

Clean (snap the ends off) green beans. Add to 100% pickle and weigh down with a plate.

Like Salt Pork and Corned Beef this will keep for months. My family regularly keeps salted beans for 1 year or more.

*** Rumor has it the ends of beans (and cucumbers) have enzymes that speed decomposition which is why they are removed.

*** Beans must be snapped, cutting them with a metal knife causes the ends to turn black as they salt.

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