

# Are You Ready For Some Ham?

By John Clarke

Easter is just around the corner, and most everybody enjoys a good ham. If you cook one for your Easter dinner and don't have a crowd, there will be leftovers for sandwiches and snacks.

Hams come in many different forms, including country ham, wet-cooked ham (which means it has been cured with some process), ready-to-serve ham and heat-and-serve. Pay attention to the labels to make the correct selection and determine the correct settings for your grill. An uncooked ham will be fun to smoke on the grill, but if you are in a hurry, get one that is labeled "Cooked—Ready to Eat." A precooked ham actually needs only to be warmed through to serve—so follow the directions on the label.

Search the internet to find all sorts of recipes for sauces for your precooked ham, but be careful on your sugar content as applying it too early will leave the ham burned. You can use the packet that comes with the ham; I just like to reduce it and combine with a low-sugar item, such as mustard, to finish it off. If you are a mustard fan, there are some great mustard sauce recipes as well.

If you decide to make an uncooked ham, you will need some significant prep time and should follow all of the instructions included with the ham. If it is a fully smoked ham, it needs to be "de-salted" by soaking in water for several days. Smithfield Ham Marketplace at [smithfieldmarketplace.com](http://smithfieldmarketplace.com) is a good resource. You can order hams here as well.

If you want to start from scratch with a fresh ham, have a conversation with your butcher. They make for a wonderful presentation for a large meal, and some grocers, such as Piggly Wiggly or IGA, have more selections of pork than the other stores here. Shop around and plan for your meal as you may need a larger ham based on attendance, and the butcher may have to order one for you.

For a typical 8-pound (not precooked) ham, approximately 15 to 20 minutes per pound at 225°F (on the indirect side of the grill) will suffice, *but you need a thermometer to check for doneness, not a clock*. If the ham is thicker or thinner (and that is usually related to weight), the cooking time can vary. If you grill frequently, I strongly recommend using a digital quick-read thermometer such as those made by ThermoWorks.

Regardless of what you end up buying, prepare your grill for indirect heating (coals offset from your food). On the Big Green Egg or ceramic grills, you can add a plate setter to further keep your food protected. Add only two or three wood chunks if you are using a precooked ham.

Once the ham reaches an internal temperature of 130 degrees (deep but not against the bone), it's time to apply the glaze. Drizzle it down the sides, and turn up the grill a bit—*and do not leave the grill unattended*. It could burn very quickly. Once the glaze is caramelized, you can wrap the ham snugly with foil and place in a cooler to create a faux cambro (an insulated device used by caterers to keep food warm for an extended period of time). If the ham is tightly wrapped in foil and covered with one or two towels *and* the cooler remains closed, it will continue to cook very gently and should come up to the desired 145 degrees in about an hour. One important note: be sure to use adequate foil to keep the juices from leaking into your cooler to avoid a permanent stain.

If using a pre-cooked ham, be sure to follow the directions on the package to set the temperature on your grill. You will want to heat it for about 30 minutes, and then wrap the ham in aluminum foil to finish the warming-through process. As the meat gets up to 130 degrees, you can baste it with a glaze of your choosing.

Pair your ham with a favorite vegetable. Baked asparagus makes a great option, and if you want to add potatoes, why not consider some sweet potatoes in a recipe of your choosing? You can also cook both on the grill.

If you want a good mustard sauce, here is a recipe for South Carolina-styled sauce (from [amazingribs.com](http://amazingribs.com)):

## Ingredients

- 2 cups prepared yellow mustard (not Dijon)
- 2/3 cup cider vinegar
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste (ketchup can be substituted)
- 1/2 teaspoon chipotle, Tabasco, or other hot sauce
- 3/4 cup sugar (Splenda can be used to reduce calories)
- 2 teaspoons chicken bouillon granules (or 1 cube)
- 2 teaspoons dried rosemary leaves
- 1 teaspoon celery seed
- 3 teaspoons dry mustard
- 2 teaspoons onion powder
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons Morton's coarse kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

## Directions

- Mix the wet ingredients in a bowl.
  - If you are using a bouillon cube, crush it with a spoon or mortar & pestle, and add it to the bowl. (Author's note: I never tried Better Than Bouillon, but I am sure it would substitute just fine; follow label directions.)
  - Crush the rosemary leaves and celery seed with a mortar & pestle, blender or coffee grinder and add to the bowl.
  - Add the rest of the dry ingredients to the bowl, and mix thoroughly.
  - Let it sit for an hour in the refrigerator for the flavors to meld. No cooking necessary.
  - This sauce will keep in the refrigerator for a month or more.
- Enjoy your Easter ham as we all welcome spring.

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