

CURING MEAT ON THE FARM

Useful Recipes For The Economic And Satisfactory Preservation of Beef And Pork.

The best way to eat meat is to eat it while fresh, for there is no way of preserving it that will retain all the nutrition and all the flavor. It is, nevertheless, frequently desirable to cure meat at home, and there is no reason why this can not be done satisfactorily and economically. Salt, sugar or molasses, tanning soda, and a little saltpeter are the only ingredients necessary.

Ordinarily the curing of meat should be begun from 24 to 36 hours after the animal is slaughtered. This allows sufficient time for the animal heat to leave the meat entirely, but not sufficient to permit decay to set in. Once the meat is tainted, no amount of preservatives will bring back its proper flavor. On the other hand, if salt is applied too soon, obnoxious gases will be retained and the meat will possess an offensive odor. It is also impossible to obtain good results when the meat is frozen.

Three useful recipes for popular forms of cured meat are given below. The only equipment necessary for them are the ingredients already mentioned and a clean hardwood barrel, or a large stone jar or crock. In considering these recipes it is well to remember that, on the whole, brine-cured meats are best for farm use. They are less trouble to prepare and the brine affords better protection against insects and vermin. A cool, moist cellar is the best place for brine curing. The cellar should be dark and tight enough to prevent flies and vermin.

Recipes for Curing.

CORNERED BEEF.—The pieces commonly used for corning are the plate, rump, cross ribs, and

brisket, or, in other words, the cheaper cuts of meat. The loin, ribs, and other fancy cuts are more often used fresh, and since there is more or less waste of nutrients in corning, this is well. The pieces for corning should be cut into convenient-sized joints, say 5 or 6 inches square. It should be the aim to cut them all about the same thickness, so that they will make an even layer in the barrel.

Meat from fat animals makes choice corned beef than that from poor animals. When the meat is thoroughly cooled it should be corning as soon as possible, as any decay in the meat is likely to spoil the brine during the corning process. Under no circumstances should the meat be brined while it is frozen. Weigh out the meat and allow 8 pounds of salt to each 100 pounds; sprinkle a layer of salt one-quarter of an inch in depth over the bottom of the barrel; pack in as closely as possible the cuts of meat, making a layer 5 or 6 inches in thickness; then put on a layer of salt, following that with another layer of meat; repeat until the meat and salt have all been packed in the barrel, care being used to reserve salt enough for a good layer over the top. After the package has stood over night add, for every 100 pounds of meat, 4 pounds of sugar, 2 ounces of baking soda, and 4 ounces of saltpeter dissolved in a gallon of tepid water. Three gallons more of water should be sufficient to cover this quantity. In case more or less than 100 pounds of meat is to be corning, make the brine in the proportion given. A loose board cover, weighted down with a heavy stone or piece of iron, should be put on the meat to keep all of it under the brine. In case any should project, rust would start and the brine would spoil in a short time. It is not necessary to boil the

brine except in warm weather. If the meat has been corning during the winter and must be kept into the summer season, it would be well to watch the brine closely during the spring, as it is more likely to spoil at that time than at any other season. If the brine appears to be ropy or does not drip freely from the finger when immersed and lifted, it should be turned off and new brine added, after carefully washing the meat. The sugar or molasses in the brine has a tendency to ferment, and, unless the brine is kept in a cool place, there is sometimes trouble from this source. The meat should be kept in the brine 28 to 40 days to secure thorough corning.

DRIED BEEF.—The round is commonly used for dried beef, the inside of the thigh being considered the choicest piece, as it is slightly more tender than the outside of the round. The round should be cut lengthwise of the grain of the meat in preparing for dried beef, so that the muscle fibers may be cut crosswise when the dried beef is sliced for table use. A tight jar or cask is necessary for curing. The process is as follows: To each 100 pounds of meat weigh out 5 pounds of salt, 3 pounds of granulated sugar, and 2 ounces of saltpeter; mix thoroughly together. Rub the meat on all surfaces with a third of the mixture and pack it in the jar as tightly as possible. Allow it to remain three days, when it should be removed and rubbed again with another third of the mixture. In repacking put at the bottom the pieces that were on top the first time. Let stand for three days, when they should be removed and rubbed with the remaining third of the mixture and allowed to stand for three days more. The meat is then ready to be removed from the pickle. The liquid forming in the jars should be removed, but

the meat should be repacked in the liquid each time. After being removed from the pickle the meat should be smoked and hung in a dry attic or near the kitchen fire where the water will evaporate from it. It may be used at any time after smoking, although the longer it hangs in the dry atmosphere the drier it will get. The drier the climate, in general, the more easily meats can be dried. In arid regions good dried meat can be made by exposing it fresh to the air, with protection from flies.

PLAIN SALT PORK.—Rub each piece of meat with fine common salt and pack closely in a barrel. Let stand over night. The next day weigh out 10 pounds of salt and 2 ounces of saltpeter to each 100 pounds of meat and dissolve in 4 gallons of boiling water. Pour this brine over the meat when cold, cover, and weight down to keep it under the brine. Meat will pack best if cut into pieces about 6 inches square. The pork should be kept in the brine till used.

SUGAR-CURED HAMS AND BACON.—When the meat is cooled, rub each piece with salt and allow it to drain over night. Then pack it in a barrel with the hams and shoulders in the bottom, using the strips of bacon to fill in between or to put on top. Weigh out for each 100 pounds of meat 8 pounds of salt, 2 pounds of brown sugar, and 2 ounces of saltpeter. Dissolve all in 4 gallons of water, and cover the meat with the brine. For summer use it will be safest to boil the brine before using. In that case it should be thoroughly cooled before it is used. For winter curing it is not necessary to boil the brine. Bacon strips should remain in this brine four to six weeks; hams six to eight weeks. This is a standard recipe and has given the best of satisfaction. Hams and bacon cured in the spring will keep right through the summer after they are smoked. The meat will be sweet and palatable if it is properly smoked, and the flavor will be good.

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