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Jerky 101

Muscle Jerky

Preferred roast: beef eye round

Preferred smoking fuel: hickory

1. Pour the water, seasoning mixture, and pink curing salt into a pot and bring to a simmer, stirring until all the salt is dissolved. Cool the marinade to room temperature, then refrigerate it until completely chilled.
2. Put the roast you're using into the freezer until very firm, then slice into strips about one inch wide, several inches long, and a quarter-inch-thick. Cut with the grain for authentic old-school chew, or slice across the grain for an easier bite.
3. Lay the strips in a briner bucket and add the marinade; then secure the locking plate, add the lid, and put the briner bucket into the refrigerator.
4. Marinate the jerky for a minimum of twenty hours, but no more than thirty hours. After thirty hours, the cure starts to damage the texture of the meat.
5. Stir the marinade thoroughly every several hours to ensure the strips are marinating evenly.
6. After the marinating is completed, preheat your smoker to 150° F, or as low as possible.
7. Remove the jerky from the marinade and lay the strips on a double layer of paper towels. Lay another double layer of towels on top and blot the jerky to remove moisture.

8. Spray stackable jerky racks with cooking spray, then lay the jerky on the racks, making sure no strips are touching.
9. Put the racks on your smoker. Every hour, spin your jerky racks 180° and rotate them top-to-bottom. This will ensure the jerky is dehydrating as evenly as possible.
10. Smoke at 150° until desired texture is achieved: fairly rigid but will not snap when bent; about 6–8 hours. Our all-time favorite way of determining doneness is sampling a piece—repeatedly!
11. When the jerky reaches the desired texture, remove from the smoker and refrigerate until chilled. Immediately after chilling, vacuum seal and refrigerate any jerky you will not consume within a week; the rest should be kept refrigerated in a bag or covered container.

Formed Jerky

Preferred meat: 85–90% lean ground beef

Preferred smoking fuel: hickory

1. Preheat your smoker to 150°, or as low as possible.
2. Spray stackable jerky racks with cooking spray.
3. Add cold water to the ground beef at a ratio of two cups per ten pounds of meat. Next, add the seasoning blend and the pink curing salt to the meat and mix very well, until the meat becomes very sticky.
4. Immediately load the meat into a jerky gun and squeeze out the strips onto the jerky racks.
5. Cover each rack with plastic wrap and let the strips sit for several hours in the refrigerator. This step allows the cure to work throughout the meat, and also gives the seasonings and spices time to really get absorbed into the meat fibers. Letting the meat cure before making the strips will change the texture of the meat, making it very difficult to load into your jerky gun.

6. Put the racks on your smoker. Every hour, spin your jerky racks 180° and rotate them top to bottom. This will ensure the jerky is dehydrating as evenly as possible.
7. Smoke at 150° until desired texture is achieved: fairly rigid but will not snap when bent; about 6–8 hours. Our all-time favorite way of determining doneness is sampling a piece—repeatedly!
8. When the jerky reaches the desired texture, remove from the smoker and refrigerate until chilled. Immediately after chilling, vacuum seal and refrigerate any jerky you will not consume within a week; the rest should be kept refrigerated in a bag or covered container.

Candied Salmon Jerky

Preferred cut: whole skin-on salmon fillet

Preferred smoking fuel: cherry

1. Pour 1 gallon water and 1 pouch Oakridge Game Changer Brine into a pot. This will be enough brine for 2 whole fillets.
2. Heat the brine to a simmer, stirring until all the salt is dissolved. Cool the marinade to room temperature, then refrigerate it until completely chilled.
3. Cut the fillet in half lengthwise, and then cut each section into strips half an inch thick.
4. Lay the strips in a briner bucket and add the marinade; then secure the locking plate, add the lid, and put the briner bucket into the refrigerator. After 2-1/2 hours, gently stir the brine to ensure the strips are brining evenly.
5. After five hours, remove the strips from the brine, rinse thoroughly, and drain.
6. Put a wire rack on a rimmed baking sheet, put the strips on the wire rack, and refrigerate, uncovered, for one hour. This allows excess moisture to drain off.
7. Preheat your smoker to 175°, or as low as possible.
8. Spray stackable jerky racks with cooking spray, then lay the strips on the racks, making sure no strips are touching.

9. Put the racks on your smoker. Every hour, spin your jerky racks 180° and rotate them top to bottom. This will ensure the salmon strips are dehydrating as evenly as possible.
10. Smoke the strips at 175° for two hours, then liberally glaze the meat with Bourbon Barrel Aged maple syrup.
11. Raise the smoker temperature to 200° and continue smoking.
12. After an additional two hours of smoking, glaze the strips again with the maple syrup.
13. Raise the smoker temperature to 225° and continue smoking until a fairly firm texture is achieved; about two more hours.
14. The candied salmon jerky is best if served immediately, but can also be chilled, then served later.
15. In the extremely improbable event that you have leftovers, they can be kept for up to three days if refrigerated in a covered container.

Alternatives

- If you don't have a briner bucket, you can also use heavy duty gallon Ziploc bags (2–3 pounds jerky in each bag) and divide the marinade between the bags. Massage the marinade into the meat, refrigerate, and repeat the massage every 3–4 hours. Make sure to set the bags on a rimmed baking sheet to catch any potential leaks.
- If you don't have jerky racks, just lay the jerky pieces on your smoker grates and omit rotating the pieces. Keep in mind that the jerky pieces in your smoker's hot spots will finish faster than the pieces in other areas.

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