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Snack Sticks 101

Instructions

Preferred protein: 80/20 ground beef or chuck roast

Preferred casing: 19mm collagen or sheep intestine casings

Preferred smoking fuel: hickory

Tip: If using venison, add 10–20% bacon ends or pork fat.

1. If using sheep intestine casings, you will need to soak them to remove the salt that these are preserved in. Rinse the casings thoroughly with cold water, then soak them in cold water for one hour. Repeat this process twice, using fresh water for each soak. This three-hour soak also rehydrates the casings, making them much easier to work with.
2. If grinding a chuck roast, cut the roast into cubes, then put the grinder head, plates, knife, and meat cubes in the freezer for 20–30 minutes.
3. Grind the cubes once through a 3/8-inch plate.
4. Mix the seasoning blend, cure, cheese (optional), and cold water (two cups per ten pounds of meat) with the ground beef just until it starts becoming tacky (if you're not using a binder, use two cups of cold water in this step, and mix the meat until it becomes extremely sticky).
5. Add the binder and one cup of cold water to the meat mixture and continue mixing it until the meat becomes extremely sticky. The binder will start to change the texture of the meat immediately; do not take a break until after step seven!

6. Put the meat mixture into your stuffer and tamp it well to eliminate air pockets.
7. Stuff the snack sticks into your desired casing.
8. Twist and cut the sticks into individual links, then refrigerate them in a tightly covered container for a minimum of four hours or as long as overnight.
9. Pre-heat your smoker to 150° F, or as low as possible.
10. Spray stackable jerky racks with cooking spray, then lay the snack sticks on the racks, making sure no sticks are touching.
11. Smoke the snack sticks at 150° for one hour, then rotate them as follows: roll the sticks 180° on the rack (upside down), rotate the jerky racks 180°, and rotate the position of the racks in the smoker from top-to-bottom. This extra step will ensure the sticks are cooking as evenly as possible.
12. Smoke the sticks for another hour, then rotate them again as described above.
13. Raise the smoker temperature to 200° and continue smoking the snack sticks until their internal temperature hits 150°. Every 15–20 minutes, rotate the racks and check the temperature of several sticks on each rack. The sticks should finish 30–60 minutes after raising the smoker temperature to 200°.
14. Remove the sticks from the smoker and immerse them in an ice water bath for 5–10 minutes to stop the cooking process.
15. Immediately vacuum seal and freeze any snack sticks you will not consume within a week, and keep the rest refrigerated in a bag or covered container.

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