

Meat Processing Cheat Sheet

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General Guidelines

- Always use cure for jerkies, snack sticks, summer sausages, ring bolognas, bolognas, hams, salamis, bacons, etc!
Sodium nitrite (sometimes referred to as Insta Cure No. 1, Prague Powder, or pink curing salt) is the one you will use most frequently. The correct ratio for sodium nitrite (with the exception of bacon; see bacon section) is 1 oz per 25 lbs. of meat or 1 tsp per 5 lbs. of meat.
Sodium nitrate (sometimes referred to as Insta Cure No. 2) is only to be used in whole muscle curing or the making of dry cured sausages or salamis.
- If adding high temp cheese to product, 10% cheese is a great ratio. Ex: 8.5 lbs. venison + 1.5 lbs. ground beef + 1 lb. high temp cheese + 2 tsp cure #1 (sodium nitrite) + seasoning of choice would make a terrific summer sausage!
- Add 2 cups of cold water (per 10 lbs. meat) to your meat after grinding to make mixing and stuffing easier.
- After stuffing snack sticks, summer sausages, ring bolognas, or bolognas, refrigerate them in a tightly covered container for a minimum of 4 hours, or as long as overnight. 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.
- Cook to internal temps of: 150 degrees for pork, beef, veal, lamb, and game; 160 degrees for products containing poultry.
- After removing snack sticks, summer sausages, ring bolognas, or bolognas from the smoker, immerse them in an ice water bath for 5-10 minutes. This stops the cooking process.
- Muscle jerky should be marinated a minimum of 20 hours, but no more than 30 hours. After 30 hours, the cure starts to negatively change the texture of the meat.
- When making formed jerky, squeeze the strips onto a wire rack, cover each rack with plastic wrap, and let the strips sit 1-2 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.
- If your smoker doesn't allow you to run as low as 150 degrees, try cold smoking the product before smoking it at 200-225 degrees. Cold smoke: snack sticks and formed jerky for 15-20 minutes, muscle jerky for 20-30 minutes, summer sausages for 1 hour, and bolognas for 2 hours. Cooking times will be slightly shorter than the times listed for cooking in an oven. This cold smoking should not be done on warm days!

Making Snack Sticks:

- **Using Venison?** Add 10-20% fatty pork, pork fat, bacon, or 70-80% lean ground beef.
- **Using Beef?** Use 80-90% lean ground beef.

Smoking Snack Sticks:

- **In a smoker?**
150 degrees for 2 hours; 200 degrees until the internal temperature of the sticks hits 150 degrees (approximately 30-60 minutes longer).
- **Using an oven?**
Add 1 tsp liquid smoke per 10 lbs. meat to the seasoning blend. Cook at 200 degrees until the internal temperature of the sticks hits 150 degrees (approximately 1 hour).

Making Summer Sausage or Ring Bologna:

- **Using Venison?** Add 10-20% fatty pork, pork fat, bacon, or 70-80% lean ground beef.
- **Using Beef?** Use 80-90% lean ground beef.

Smoking Summer Sausage or Ring Bologna:

- **In a smoker?**
150 degrees for 4 hours; 200 degrees until the internal temperature of the summer sausage or ring bologna hits 150 degrees (approximately 1-2 more hours).
- **Using an oven?**
Add 1 tsp liquid smoke per 10 lbs. meat to the seasoning blend. Cook at 200 degrees until the internal temperature of the summer sausage or ring bologna hits 150 degrees (approximately 3 hours).

Making Bologna:

- **Using Venison?** Add 10-20% fatty pork, pork fat, bacon, or 70-80% lean ground beef.
- **Using Beef?** Use 80-90% lean ground beef.

Smoking Bologna:

- **In a smoker?**
150 degrees for 6 hours; 200 degrees until the internal temperature of the bologna hits 150 degrees (approximately 4-6 more hours).
- **Using an oven?**
Add 1 tsp liquid smoke per 10 lbs. meat to the seasoning blend. Cook at 200 degrees until the internal temperature of the bologna hits 150 degrees (approximately 6-7 hours).

Making Muscle Jerky:

- **Using Venison?** The hindquarters or the backstraps make great muscle jerky!
- **Using Beef?** Brisket flat, top round, or eye round are great choices.

Smoking Muscle Jerky:

- **In a smoker?**
150 degrees until desired texture is achieved – fairly rigid but will not snap when bent (approximately 6-8 hours).
- **Using an oven?**
Add 1 tsp liquid smoke per 10 lbs. meat to the marinade. Set the oven as low as possible, usually 175-200 degrees. Prop open the door 1-2 inches, to let some heat escape. Cook until desired texture is achieved – fairly rigid but will not snap when bent (approximately 4-6 hours).
- **Using a dehydrator?**
Add 1 tsp liquid smoke per 10 lbs. meat to the marinade. Set the dehydrator at 150 degrees, or as low as possible. Dehydrate until desired texture is achieved – fairly rigid but will not snap when bent (approximately 6-8 hours).

Making Formed Jerky:

- **Using Venison?** Any ground venison works fine.
- **Using Beef?** Use the leanest ground beef you can possibly find!

Smoking Formed Jerky:

- **In a smoker?**
150 degrees until desired texture is achieved – fairly rigid but will not snap when bent (approximately 6-8 hours).
- **Using an oven?**
Add 1 tsp liquid smoke per 10 lbs. meat to the seasoning blend. Set the oven as low as possible, usually 175-200 degrees. Prop open the door 1-2 inches, to let some heat escape. Cook until desired texture is achieved – fairly rigid but will not snap when bent (approximately 2-3 hours).
- **Using a dehydrator?**
Add 1 tsp liquid smoke per 10 lbs. meat to the seasoning blend. Set the dehydrator at 150 degrees, or as low as possible. Dehydrate until desired texture is achieved – fairly rigid but will not snap when bent (approximately 3-4 hours).

Making Bacon:

- **Using a skinned pork belly:**

Basic cure for a 10 lb. belly (adjust as needed for different weights):

- 4 oz kosher salt
- 2.25 oz dark brown sugar
- .75 oz cure #1 (sodium nitrite)

For a maple bacon, slather the belly in maple syrup before applying the cure mixture. For a peppered bacon, add 3 tablespoons coarsely ground black pepper to the basic cure mixture, and lightly dust the belly with more before refrigerating for the pellicle formation.

Mix the cure ingredients well and apply to all sides of the belly. Put the belly in a large Zip lock bag or covered container. Refrigerate for five or six days, flipping the belly once a day. Very thick bellies might take an extra day or two to cure; the belly should feel fairly firm to the touch.

After the curing process is completed, remove the belly from the bag, rinse it well, and soak it in cold water for 30 minutes. Then pat it dry with paper towels, set it on a wire rack on a rimmed baking sheet, and put it back in the refrigerator, uncovered, for 18-24 hours to form a pellicle.

To cook:

- **In a smoker?**
150 degrees for 2 hours; 200 degrees until the internal temperature of the bacon hits 150 degrees (approximately 2-3 more hours).
- **Using an oven?**
200 degrees until the internal temperature of the bacon reaches 150 degrees (approximately 3-4 hours).

Let cool on the counter for 30-40 minutes before slicing, refrigerating or freezing.

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Making Fresh Sausage:

- **Using Venison?** Add 20-30% fatty pork or pork fat.
- **Using Pork?** Pork Butts are perfect! Add up to 10% pork fat for really juicy sausages!

Before vacuum sealing fresh sausage, put in bags or wrap in plastic wrap and put the sausage into the freezer until very firm. This will prevent smashing while vacuum sealing.

Cooking Fresh Sausage:

- **In a charcoal grill?**
350 degrees until internal temperature of sausages reads 160 degrees (approximately 20-30 minutes).
- **Using an oven?**
Brown in a skillet over medium heat until internal temperature of sausages reads 160 degrees (approximately 20-30 minutes).