



USING SPACER PLATES

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Spacer Plates are 2-hole plates, primarily used with a stuffing tube to stuff casings. When used for this purpose remove the grinding knife. Spacer plates can only be used with bell shaped stuffing tubes. This allows room for the meat to clear the plate before being diverted toward the sprout hole. However, spacer plates can be used with a knife to make the first grind, stew meat or chum.

Definitions you should know to understand this article:

Grinding cylinder: The chamber "bowl" that houses the feedscrew, grinding plate and knife.

Cylinder Ring: The treaded ring that screws on the end of the grinding cylinder and exerts pressure on the grinding plate and knife.

Feedscrew: The conveyor spiral shaped "worm" that fits inside the grinding cylinder and moves the meat out of the cylinder and turns the 4 bladed grinding knife.

Grinding Plate: Round disc with many holes of varying diameters - from 1/8" to 1". Determines the coarseness of the grind and centers the feedscrew into position.

Grinding Knife: Star or 4-blade device that shears the meat as it is being moved through the plate by the feedscrew.

Spacer Plate: Round 2-hole disc used to center the feedscrew when stuffing without a knife installed or to make large chunks of meat when a knife is used.

Using a spacer plate

Method 1:

Grind your meat using a knife and a grinding plate. When the grinding is complete remove the grinding plate and knife and install the spacer plate along with a stuffing tube and feed the meat through the grinder again. The feedscrew is now moving the meat into the stuffing tube filling the casing.

This method has the meat going through the grinder three times.

- ❑ First Grind - using a grinding knife and large hole plate (1/2" or larger).
- ❑ Second Grind - using a grinding knife with a small hole plate. (3/16" for sausage).
- ❑ The Third Time - using the spacer plate & stuffing tube without a grinding knife.

Method 2:

A much better method is to use the spacer plate **with a grinding knife** for the first grind. Then install the smaller hole plate (keeping the grinding knife installed) and add the stuffing tube. Then regrind and stuff. This gives the feedscrew much bigger pieces of meat to move forward against the backpressure created by the grind plate, knife and stuffing tube. Failure to move the meat forward results in "**Mushy Meat**". See Mushy Meat when stuffing off of a grinder below.

This method has the meat going through the grinder two times.

- ❑ First Grind: - using a spacer plate with a grinding knife to produce large chunks of meat.
- ❑ Second Grind - using a grinding knife with a small hole plate. (3/16" for sausage) but adding the stuffing tube and stuffing on this grind

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Related information:

“Mushy” Meat When Grinding

The “mush” comes from the meat being pushed by the feedscrew through the plate holes but not being cut clean by the knife. This is caused if the knife and/or plate are dull or the tension between the plate and knife is not sufficient to allow the knife to clean cut the meat.

The tension between the plate and knife is set properly if the ring can tighten the plate tight against the knife. This can only occur if the plate protrudes out of the cylinder somewhat to allow the ring to contact the plate and tighten it against the knife.

Most feedscrews have a washer on the rear shaft that can wear out or get lost. This allows the feedscrew to insert too far into the cylinder thus allowing the plate to recess into the cylinder instead of protruding out.

Also, meat ground too many times will become “mushy”

“Mushy” Meat When Stuffing Off Of A Grinder

The “mush” can come from the above listed reasons so start there. If everything looks ok with the plate and knife Then...

The "mush" is occurring because the meat is staying in the cylinder too long; allowing the feedscrew to pulverize the meat. The meat stays in the cylinder too long because the stuffing horn creates a bottleneck slowing down the meat delivery out of the cylinder. As the feedscrew turns the meat slips between the feedscrew edge and the cylinder wall instead of moving forward and out of the cylinder and is getting “mushed” up. **This is called bypass**

Older feedscrews and cylinders that are worn have a wider clearance between them allowing even more meat to bypass.

Using a spacer plate without a knife will keep your meat from getting ground again but a spacer plate does not deal with the bypass created when a stuffing tube is installed (does not speed up the meat movement through the grinder cylinder). The longer the time spent in the cylinder with a turning feedscrew the musher the meat becomes.

If you must stuff off of a grinder using a stuffing tube, grind the meat first through a spacer plate (2 hole plate) or kidney plate (3 hole plate) then install the final grind plate, usually a 3/16” plate, add the stuffing tube and grind and stuff on this second grind.

The best solution is to buy a stuffer. They were invented because of this problem of trying to stuff off of a grinder. You will get an improved texture stuffing with a stuffer.

Tips to know:

- Never grind meat more than twice,
- Keep the meat and grinding cylinder lubricated with water,
- Grind only very cold meat,
- The first grind should be done through a very big hole plate such as a kidney (3 hole) plate, this allows for bigger chunks and helps the feed screw to pick up and move the meat out against the backpressure of the plate and/or stuffing tube.

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