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**Jerky** is an all-time favorite snack and can be made from beef, wild game, fish, chicken or turkey.

E.Coli Concerns: The only safe way to prepare jerky made of ground meat is to raise the internal temperature of the meat to 160°F. This is best accomplished by preheating the meat until the internal temperature is at least 160°F. for at least 5 minutes. Then you may process the jerky in the preferred manner.

### MEAT CHOICE

Jerky is made from lean cuts of meat such as Venison, Beef Skirts, Eye of Round, Sirloin Tip, Brisket, Inside Round, Flank Steaks, Chicken or Turkey Breasts. Flank and Round steaks from beef or wild game seem to be the meat of choice for most jerky makers. You can also make jerky from ground meats using a jerky gun or jerky press. (Be sure to remove any fat or membrane from the meat.)

### CURE OR UNCURED METHODS \*

- Jerky Meat With Cure - Can be cold smoked or dried at low temperatures (under 160°F.) without the risk of spoiling. Making jerky this way allows you to cold smoke jerky in just about any type smokehouse you can fashion. Cure also adds it own unique flavor to the final taste.
- Jerky Meat Without Cure - Must be cooked or processed at temperatures above 160°F. This method of making jerky has to be done in ovens or smokers that allow the temperature to be regulated and maintained above 160°F.

\* **Many seasoning packages come with a cure pack. However, some of the manufacturers whose seasonings have traditionally been used in commercial operations such as meat markets and sausage production plants do not put cure packs in their seasonings. If smoking or processing your jerky at temperatures under 160°F. you must use a cure. Cure is available in 1 oz. packs to 25 lb. boxes and larger.**

### JERKY MAKING METHODS

Dry Method - Whole Muscle: Layering is the traditional method of preparing jerky using cure and seasonings in a dry mixture. Sprinkling mixture over the strips of meat.

- Remove all fat and membrane from the meat.
- Slice meat in 1/4" - 1/2" thick strips using a meat slicer or sharp knife and cutting board.
- Sprinkle both sides with seasoning and cure mixture. Use manufacturer's recommended amount of seasoning for this method.
- Layer the meat in a plastic pan, zip lock bag or stainless steel container. Do not use an aluminum container.
- Cured Method -- Use the cure pack that came with your seasoning, if cure is not provided you must add at a rate of 1 oz. cure for 25 lbs. of meat. Then follow the directions below.
- Uncured Method – Follow the directions below leaving out the cure.

Hold the meat at 38-40° F for 24 to 48 hours. Seasoning and cure mixes are formulated to penetrate the meat at a given rate, usually 1/4" per 24 hours. If your strips are thicker than 1/4" you will have to increase your hold (curing) time accordingly.

Remove from refrigerator and choose a cooking or drying method.

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Dry Method - Ground Meat

This type of jerky is made from ground meat and formed into strips using a jerky gun, jerky press, rolling pin, sausage stuffer or by hand.

- Trim all fat and membrane from the meat.
- Grind 90-95% lean meat through a 3/8" grinding plate.

Thoroughly mix the seasoning and cure with the meat until the meat is sticky. Adding cold water (1/2 cup per 1 lb. of meat) will reduce shrinkage and provide a better mix. Use manufacturer's recommended amount of seasoning for this method.

Cured Method -- Use the cure pack that came with your seasoning, if cure is not provided you must add at a rate of 1 oz. cure for 25 lbs. of meat. Then follow directions below.

Uncured Method--Follow directions below leaving out the cure.

- Place in a plastic pan, zip lock bag or stainless steel container. Do not use an aluminum container.
- Hold the meat at 38-40°F for 8 to 12 hours. Seasoning and cure mixes are formulated to penetrate the meat at a given rate, usually 1/4" per 24 hours. With ground meat the seasonings and cure can penetrate faster than with whole muscle, hence the shorter hold (curing) time.
- Regrind through a 1/8" grinding plate and form into strips by hand, jerky press, jerky gun, stuffer or rolling pin.
- Remove from refrigerator and choose a cooking or drying method.

Marinade Method - Whole Muscle

Soaking the jerky strips in a marinade solution consisting of water, seasoning, and cure.

- Trim all fat and membrane from the meat.
- Slice meat in 1/4" thick strips using a sharp knife and cutting board.
- Place meat strips in a plastic pan, zip lock bag or stainless steel container. Do not use an aluminum container.
- Pour marinade solution (1 gallon) over meat mixing thoroughly. Use manufacturer's recommended amount of seasoning for this method.

Cured Method -- Use the cure pack that came with your seasoning. If cure is not provided you must add at a rate of 2-oz. cure for each of gallon water. Then follow directions below.

Uncured Method --Follow directions below leaving out the cure.

Allow meat to marinade for about 8-48 hours at 38-40°F. Mixing (overhauling) every 4 to 8 hours by rotating the bottom strips to the top. Remove from refrigerator, shake the pieces dry and choose a cooking or drying method.

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**COOKING & DRYING METHODS:**

Jerky Strips ¼" Thick: The difference between cooking and drying is the time the jerky is left in your oven, smoker-oven or smokehouse. Jerky strips ¼" thick can be cooked in as little as 1¼ hours if the heat is up around 200°F. At this point the jerky will be flexible and chewable. If you like your jerky harder you will want to dry it. Lowering the temperature and/or lengthening the time accomplishes drying by removing moisture.

Dehydrator Method: Drying

Cured Method

- Place strips of meat on the dehydrator trays and place in dehydrator.
- Follow the manufacturer's suggested temperature and instructions. Use 145°F. if no information is provided.
- Leave in dehydrator for 4-6 hours at 145°F. However your time may vary according to the humidity of the air. Start sampling after 3 hours to find the correct time to remove the jerky.

Household Oven Prepared Method: Cooking

Use Either The Cured or Uncured Method

- Place strips of meat on a wire rack or jerky screen and place it on a high shelf in the oven. Place foil or a cookie sheet on a lower shelf to catch drippings.
- Set oven temperature between 175°F to 200°F or the lowest it will go.
- Place rack in oven and bake for 2 to 3 hours and then sample. Oven door must be slightly ajar to release moisture for the meat to dry. Watch the meat carefully and remove it when it is to your liking.

Smoker Oven Prepared Method: Cooking

Use Either Cured or Uncured Method

- Place strips of meat on a wire rack or jerky screen and place it on a high shelf in the oven. Place foil or a cookie sheet on a lower shelf to catch drippings.
- Set oven temperature to 175°F.
- Place rack in oven and bake for 2 to 4 hours until meat is dried to your liking.

Smokehouse Method: Drying

Use Cured Method Only

- Place strips of meat on a wire rack or jerky screen and place in the smokehouse.
- Set smokehouse temperature to 140°F. and apply smoke for 2 hours. Stop the smoke, raise the temperature to 160°F. and continue to cook the jerky for another 2 to 4 hours or until the correct degree of dryness are reached.

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Meat Tips:

- You can make jerky from just about any meat you have on hand. If you cannot slice strips, then make cubes about 1" square. Prepare the same way as you would prepare strips. You should cure cubes a bit longer. (1" cubes will take about 48 hours.)
- Before slicing, put the meat in the freezer until just firm (2 hr.); it will slice much more easily and uniformly. You can slice the strips of meat thin and wide, like bacon, if you like. However, don't make them too thin or they will be crisp. An electric food slicer save time and gives a uniform thickness to the meat. Be sure to set it at about 1/4". Be sure to WATCH THE GRAIN of the meat when slicing: Across the grain for tender and with the grain for tough and chewy.
- Weigh your meat after you have trimmed it. Now you will know exactly how much seasoning mix you need.

Cooking Tips:

- Make a small batch the first time and see whether your taste will want more/less garlic, salt, brown sugar, etc. The 'heaviness' of the Worcestershire sauce can be diluted with water, if need be.
- Do not be afraid to experiment. Try and taste your jerky after cooking for 3 to 4 hours so you will know when it is the way you like it. Do not over smoke or over cook jerky. The longer you smoke it the stronger the smoke taste will become. Overcooking jerky will dry it out and make it tougher to chew.
- Coat the jerky screen or rack with a light coat of oil or a non-stick product like Pam to prevent sticking.
- If you don't have a jerky screen you can make hanging jerky. Hang the strips of meat from the top oven rack in your stove oven or your smoker oven. Using a toothpick as a hanger, simply insert the toothpick through the top of the strip of meat and hang the meat through the racks cross pieces.

Storage Tips:

- Refrigerate after smoking or cooking until ready to eat.
- For extended storage place jerky in small packages in freezer.

**A Good Basic Marinade Using Game Meat - Also excellent for marinating tenderized cutlets.**

- 5 lbs. venison back strap, tenders or muscled out hind quarters
- 1 c. water
- 1 c. Worcestershire sauce
- 3/4 c. Soy sauce
- 3/4 c. Teriyaki sauce
- 3 tsp. onion powder
- 3 tsp. garlic powder
- 3 tsp. coarse black pepper

Optional: (For 5 lbs. of meat)

- 1 level tsp. cure (if you process at temperatures under 160°F).
- Add 5-oz. liquid smoke (if you do not have a smokehouse) to the seasonings and mix with the meat.
- For sweetness add either: 4 oz. dark corn syrup or 3 tbsp. brown sugar.
- 1-2 tsp. cayenne pepper (to add heat)

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