

December, 1917

Extension Bulletin

Series 1, No. 129

Colorado Agricultural College

EXTENSION SERVICE

Fort Collins, Colorado

H. T. FRENCH, Director

HOME CURING OF MEATS AND THEIR PREPARATION

BY

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CO-OPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS—
COLORADO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE AND U. S. DEPARTMENT OF
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HOME CURING OF MEATS AND THEIR PREPARATION

By Miriam M. Haynes, State Leader of
County Home Demonstrators

There should be a revival of interest in the home curing of meats on all Colorado farms, not alone for home consumption but for city trade. Let our slogan be "More and Better Cured Meat In Every Farm Home In Colorado." Following are some practical suggestions for the home curing of meat.

KINDS OF MEAT FOR CURING

1. Meats which contain a reasonable amount of soft fat which in a measure overcomes the hardening effect of the salt and brine on the muscle.
2. Avoid curing meat too young. If the flesh is watery, the tissue collapses when the water is extracted, leaving the muscle hard and unpalatable.
3. Light carcasses are best. Hogs should be well fattened, but there is a demand for lean meat. Light carcasses are best suited to farm facilities for curing.

CONDITION OF MEAT

1. To secure a good finished product, the meat must be sound and of A No. 1 quality.
2. Avoid poorly bled, bruised or diseased carcasses.
3. Be careful not to store meat in rooms where gasoline, kerosene or paint is kept, as flesh absorbs odors easily.
4. Avoid meat from animals that were exhausted before killing. The meat is much harder to keep.

THOROUGH COOLING

1. Meat should be thoroughly cooled before one attempts to cure it. Keep the meat in a room varying in temperature from 32° to 36° Farenheit.
2. On account of the enzymes and other ferments in meat, if the cooling is not thorough so as to stop the action of ferments, tainted meat is apt to be the result.

3. If possible, kill during the winter, when alternate freezing and thawing is not apt to take place. Thoroughly cooled meat "stands up" and can be cut smoother and neater than half cooled. The meat should not be in a frozen condition, for when frozen the brine cannot penetrate freely and the meat will be of uneven flavor.

METHODS OF MEAT PRESERVATION

Drying.—The meat is cooled and quickly dried. This method is suitable to western conditions, i.e., a high altitude and dry climate. The drying forms a coat on the surface and shuts out bacteria. It is known as "jerked meat".

Freezing.—This method is common, inexpensive and desirable. The cold checks the growth of bacteria, which cause decomposition. In thawing, frozen meat suffers a small loss of albuminous material and extractive salts, but this is less than in the case of pickling. Freezing assists the ripening process and makes meat more tender, therefore, is particularly used in low grades of meat which are tough. In freezing the winter's meat supply the meat should be blocked out as wanted for use, sorted, frozen separately and packed in barrels or bins in the snow. Protect the boxes of meat as far as possible from alternate freezing and thawing. Unless wrapped or covered, frozen meat "takes on air" and darkness in color. Frozen meat in thawing does not keep as well as fresh meat owing to the albuminous juices which appear on the surface, making an excellent media for bacteria. Pieces of frozen meat should be thawed slowly so as not to lose much of the extractives.

Partially Cooking and Packing in Lard.—A very common method of preserving fresh meat from small carcasses, is that of cutting the meat in thin pieces, frying it until almost done, seasoning it with salt and then packing the hot slices into clean, hot stone jars and covering with lard. The cooking of the fresh meat sterilizes it, and the lard excludes the air.

Preserving by Means of Chemicals.—The most commonly used chemicals are saltpeter, salt, sugar and baking soda. Saltpeter is used to retain and intensify the natural reddish color of the meat. Do not use too much, as it will cause the meat to take on a greenish appearance and to become "dry and woody". Salt preserves the meat through its astringent and germicidal effect. It draws the moisture from the meat and contracts the muscles and shuts out air. It has a tendency to make the muscle tissue hard and dry. Internally, it prevents further work of bac-

teria. Sugar and molasses have the opposite effect. They help to retain the moisture in the meat and have a softening and mellowing effect upon the fibres and connective tissue. They have some slight curative powers when combined with salt and salt-peter. Baking soda is used in brines, especially for meat that is a little old, and to sweeten the brine. It is best to use soft water which has been boiled and strained.

UTENSILS FOR PACKING MEATS

Non-leaking, easily cleaned vessels should be used. Stone jars are excellent, but are too easily broken. Hardwood barrels are acceptable on the farm.

SMOKE HOUSE AND CONTROL OF FIRE

A serviceable and inexpensive smoke house can be constructed from cheap lumber. Eight to ten feet high, and four feet square are good dimensions. Ventilation to let out the warm air should be provided at the top of the building. Large dry goods boxes or barrels may be used as a makeshift smoke house, but it is better to have a permanent place always ready. Often several families go together and build a substantial one.

Meat is smoked to increase the keeping qualities by the deposition of preservative material, to make it more attractive and palatable. To "take" smoke well the meat should be comparatively dry. It is well to lead the smoke through a tile, pipe or canal to the box or barrel under the meat and in this way the smoke cools and there is little danger of the meat having a smoky, cooked taste. When starting to smoke the meat, it is better to have a good fire until the meat takes on color, then a slow smouldering fire is best.

WOODS FOR SMOKING

Hickory, aspen, cottonwood, apple wood and corn cobs are good. Avoid the soft woods, as they give off considerable carbon.

HAMS AND BACON

Sugar curing gives far better meat than plain salt brine.

Use ten pounds of salt, three pounds of sugar, (brown preferred,) and three ounces of saltpetre for each 100 pounds of meat, dissolving the mixture in 5 gallons of water. It is best to boil the brine, but it must be thoroughly cooled after the boiling before being put upon the meat. Be sure to have enough brine to come at least 2 inches above the meat.

For immediate use, bacon may be taken out of the brine in three weeks, and hams in four. Where the meat is to be kept some time before using, leave bacon in the brine 4 to 6 weeks, and hams 6 to 10 weeks, depending on their size. The meat must be kept in a cool place while in the brine, or the meat is likely to mold and sour.

SALT PORK

Rub each piece of "salt side" meat with fine salt and pack closely in a box, barrel or stone jar. Let stand over night. To 4 gallons of boiling water add 10 pounds salt and 2 ounces of saltpeter for each 100 pounds of meat. Cool the brine and pour it over the meat, and place a weight on top to keep the meat down.

LENGTH OF TIME TO SMOKE MEAT

The length of time depends upon the nature of the meat, whether from medium carcasses or heavy carcasses, and upon the smoke. During butchering time in the winter in cold climates, it is best to keep the fire going continually until the smoking is finished, keeping the temperature about the same. Smoke when applied to hams 12 to 20 hours, gives a mild straw color. If the meat is to be used at once, 24 to 36 hours is enough for the average piece of bacon, weighing 12 to 15 pounds. When smoking meat to keep for future use, long, slow smoking is best. The smoking should extend over a period of from 3 to 6 weeks with a little smoke each day. Do not allow the meat to get overheated. Smoke does not penetrate frozen meat and any frozen meat to be smoked should be thoroughly thawed. Should the meat get moldy, wipe it with a dry cloth and hang it up in a free airy place, away from flies.

KEEPING SMOKED MEATS

In moderate weather, the meat may be left hanging in the smoke house. Keep the house dark, well-ventilated and dry. For long keeping, wrap the pieces of meat in wax or wrapping paper, then in a muslin, burlap or canvas sack. Whitewash the sacks and hang meat in a cool, airy, dark place, to keep away insects.

SAUSAGE

For pork sausage, use three parts of lean to one of fat. For each 4 pounds of the meat use about 1 ounce of salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce of black pepper, and $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce of ground sage.

Mixed beef and pork sausage may be made from two parts pork and one part beef. It is mixed and cured in the same way as pork sausage.

"PON HAUSE" OR SCRAPPLE

All meat not used for sausage, hams, shoulders and side meat, may be placed in a kettle to be cooked for "meat pudding". This includes the head, with tongue, heart, liver and all clean skins after lard has been stripped from them. To these trimmings add water and cook slowly until very done. Remove bones and largest pieces of meat, cut the meat into small pieces and place again in the kettle. Add water and thicken with about equal amounts of cornmeal and buckwheat flour. Cook slowly, stirring constantly. Season to taste with salt, pepper and sage. When done, pour into dripping pans. When firm, slice down. Serve cold or fry as mush.

TO RENDER LARD

Pure lard is made from the fat of the hog. Leaf lard is best, but the back strip of the side, the trimmings from the hams, shoulder and neck are also used. The coarser, stronger pieces of fat should be used for soap grease. Cut the fat into small pieces about 1 inch square, being sure that all scraps of lean meat have been cut off or they may stick and give the lard a scorched taste. Place the uniform cubes in an iron kettle to about three-quarters full. Keep the kettle uncovered. A moderate, steady fire is needed and frequent stirring is necessary. If fire gets too hot, the lard will foam. Cook until the cracklings begin to brown and are light enough to float. When done, remove from the stove, strain through a muslin cloth into stone jars or tin lard pails. Stir occasionally until the lard is cool enough to solidfy; this tends to whiten the lard and make it smooth. A little soda is sometimes added to whiten lard—1 teaspoon soda to a 20 gallon kettle of lard. Store in a dry, cool place, free from any odors which are readily absorbed.

CRACKLINGS

Cracklings may be used in the making of soap according to directions on any box of lye. The cracklings may be crushed and added to corn bread or mush.

CORNED BEEF

Use the cheaper cuts of meat from the lower part of the body. Cut into convenient chunks of about equal thickness. Pack the meat first in salt, using 8 pounds of salt for each 100 pounds of meat. After the meat has remained 8 to 12 hours in the salt pack, add a brine composed of 4 pounds sugar, 2 ounces baking soda, 4 ounces salt peter, dissolved in 4 gallons of water. This

should be enough to cover the meat, but if not, add more water. Put a weight on the meat to keep it beneath the brine, as any exposed parts will spoil.-

Keep the vessel in a cool place, and leave the meat in the brine until ready to use. If the brine appears ropy or thick, pour it off, wash the meat and repack in a new brine. The brine on corned beef must be watched closely as the slightest tainting of the brine results in soured meat, beef spoiling much more readily than pork.

DRIED BEEF

Home cured dried beef is a delicacy that no farm home should be without. The hind quarter of a thin cow is suitable for this purpose, and in cutting up the quarter, one should start near the back and carve out the large muscles without cutting across them. This will give irregular shaped pieces of meat which can be cut across the grain when dried.

Make a mixture of 5 pounds salt, 3 pounds sugar, 2 ounces saltpeter for each 100 pounds of meat. Use one third of this mixture to rub into all surfaces of the meat, then pack the meat in a barrel. After three days, take out, rub with another third of the mixture and repack, this time putting at the bottom the pieces which were on top before. Leave the liquid which appears in the barrel, repacking the meat in it. At the close of another three days, repeat the process, and leave for three more days. The meat may then be taken out, allowed to drain a day, smoked, and hung up to dry. It needs no covering when drying, except to keep off the dirt.

COOKERY OF CURED MEATS

The lack of fresh meat in the farm home during the greater part of the year has always been a trying problem to the farm housewife. However, she should have at her disposal an abundance of cured meat which may be cooked in a variety of ways and made palatable and attractive. Meat may be perfectly cured and then spoiled if not properly prepared for the table. We are slowly learning that there is more than one way to cook ham, bacon and corned beef. The making of certain sauces which "go well" with various meats and bring out their flavor adds much to the palatability and serves to give variety to the cured meat diet.

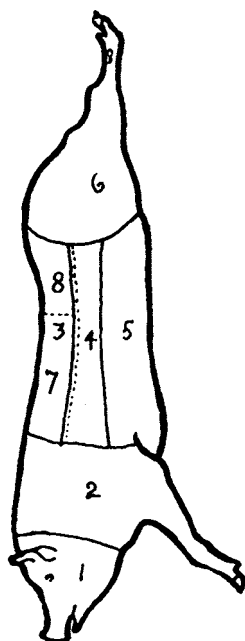
Boiled Ham

Soak the ham over night in cold water to cover. Wash thoroughly, trim off band skin near the end of the bone, put in a

kettle, skin down. Cover the meat with cold water, heat to the boiling point and cook slowly until tender. (Ham 12 to 14 lbs. for 5 or 6 hrs.) Remove kettle from the range and set aside, that the ham may partially cool in broth in which it has been cooked. Slice when cool. Thin slices of cold boiled ham may be frizzled in butter and drained. This is nice for school or picnic lunch.

CUTS OF PORK

- 1—Head
- 2—Shoulder
- 3—Back
- 4—Middle cut
- 5—Belly
- 6—Ham
- 7—Ribs
- 8—Loin



To Bake Ham

Take the ham from water, remove outside skin, score fat (if deep), sprinkle with brown sugar and bread crumbs, bake 1 hour in a slow oven.

Note.—The ham may be cooked in fireless or pressure cooker. A few cloves may be stuck in the ham when baking.

Variation.—Cut slice from ham $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick. Trim and save all fat for future use. Place in a baking pan and sprinkle well with brown sugar, set cored apples (peeled if preferred) on top. Baked ham may be garnished with cauliflower, spinach, cabbage, or sauerkraut. A thick slice of ham may be cooked in milk or cider.

To Glaze Ham

After cooking and peeling ham, brush with beaten egg and

coat with a paste made of 1 cup of bread crumbs made into a smooth paste with 1 cup milk and 1 tablespoon of butter. Brown in a moderate oven. One tablespoon of sugar may be added.

Potted Ham

Use for this the harder portions and the pieces that do not make presentable slices. Allow one-third fat meat, (scant) to two-thirds lean meat. Mince fine enough to make a smooth paste. Season with salt (omit if the ham is very salty) and cayenne pepper. Heat thoroughly and pack in small pots. Excellent for school lunch sandwiches.

Potatoes With Bacon or Ham

Slice cold boiled or baked potatoes and place in a pan, salt and dredge lightly with flour. Pour in enough milk to almost cover the potatoes. Cover the top with thin slices of bacon or ham. Bake until the meat becomes crispy and the potatoes heated through. The oven should not be too hot.

Ham Souffle

2 tbsp. butter.
3 tbsp. flour.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ c. scalded milk.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt.
Cayenne.
Yolks of 3 eggs.
Whites of 3 eggs.
1 c. ground ham.

Melt the butter, add the flour and when well mixed, add gradually the scalded milk, then add the salt and cayenne. Remove from the fire, add the yolks of eggs beaten until thick and lemon-colored, cool the mixture, cut and fold in the whites and 1 cup of chopped or ground ham or bacon (cooked). Pour into greased baking dish and bake 35 to 40 minutes. Serve at once.

Fried Salt Pork

Remove the rind and cut the pork in thin slices and score the edges. If very salt, freshen by placing in a skillet with cup of cold water and bringing it slowly to the boiling point. Pour off the water and fry slowly until crisp and brown, drain. Remove some of the fat and make a gravy with 1 cup of milk and 1 tablespoon of flour; cook thoroughly. Serve with baked potatoes, fried mush, hominy, fish or split biscuits.

Note.—Salt side of pork is excellent to boil with Pinto or other beans.

Breakfast Bacon

Remove the rind, and cut the bacon in thin slices. Cook in a hot frying pan, or bake in dripping pan, in oven. Drain. Serve with boiled potatoes or hominy. The combination of calves' liver and bacon is a pleasing breakfast dish. Bacon or salt pork may be added to string beans, beets, navy beans, or greens.

Liver and Bacon

Cover slices of liver cut $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in thickness with boiling water and let stand 5 minutes, to draw out the blood. Drain and remove the thin outside skin and veins. Cut in pieces for serving; sprinkle with salt and pepper, dredge with flour and cook in bacon fat. The liver should be cooked thoroughly.

Boiled Corned Beef

Wipe the meat, tie it into shape, put into a kettle and cover with cold water. Bring slowly to the boiling point; skim. Lower the temperature and cook until tender. Cool the meat in water in which it has been cooked. Press, under a weight. Slice when cold.

New England Boiled Dinner

5-6 lbs. corned beef from plate or brisket.

6 onions.

6 carrots.

6 turnips.

8 potatoes.

1 small head cabbage

Wash meat in cold water, drain, place in a kettle and cover with cold water. Let boil 5 minutes, skim. If meat is very "briny" drain and add fresh boiling water; heat slowly and let simmer for 5 hours. Remove beef from liquor, add:

Carrots, washed, scraped and quartered.

Onions, peeled and cut in quarters.

Turnips.

Cabbage. Remove outer leaves, quarter.

Potatoes, peeled.

When the vegetables are done, arrange the meat in the center of a hot platter and surround it with carrots, turnips, onions, cabbage and potatoes. Sprinkle vegetables with finely chopped parsley.

Note.—If beets are used, cook and serve separately. Salt side of pork or a "ham bone" may be used as basis for boiled dinner.

Dried Beef and Gravy

- 1 c. dried beef, sliced thin.
- 2 c. milk.
- 4 tb. butter or drippings.
- 2 tb. flour.
- 1½ tsp. salt.
- Pepper.

Remove skin and separate the dried beef into pieces. Place some fat in a skillet, when it is hot add dried beef and warm thoroughly until the edges curl. Make a white sauce of the last five ingredients. Add the sauce to the beef, reheat and serve on hot toast.

Note.—If the beef is a little old and strong, parboil it in hot water for 10 minutes.

Variation.—Cooked macaroni, rice or hard cooked egg may be added to the white sauce. One-half teaspoon of dry mustard may be added to the flour in making the sauce.

SUGGESTIVE FOODS TO SERVE WITH CURED MEATS

- Bacon, eggs—Fried apple or apple rings.
- Ham, eggs—Mustard or horseradish sauce.
- Sausage—Escalloped apples, mush, hominy.
- Salt side of pork—Beans, hominy or greens.
- Liver and bacon—Fried mush.
- Corned beef—Variety of vegetables for New England dinner.
- Ham croquettes—Baked or creamed potatoes.

REFERENCES

Farmers' Bulletins. Obtained free from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Division of Publications, F. B. No. 183 "Meat on the Farm, Butchering, Curing and Keeping."

Acknowledgment

The writer of this circular is indebted to the Department of Animal Husbandry of the Colorado Agricultural College for much of the subject matter relating to cured meats.

