

To Cure Bacon Or Hams In The Devonshire Way

Ingredients

To every 14 lbs. of meat, allow 2 oz. of saltpetre, 2 oz. of salt prunella, 1 lb. of common salt. For the pickle, 3 gallons of water, 5 lbs. of common salt, 7 lbs. of coarse sugar, 3 lbs. of bay-salt.

Method

Weigh the sides, hams, and cheeks, and to every 14 lbs. allow the above proportion of saltpetre, salt prunella, and common salt. Pound and mix these together, and rub well into the meat; lay it in a stone trough or tub, rubbing it thoroughly, and turning it daily for 2 successive days. At the end of the second day, pour on it a pickle made as follows:--Put the above ingredients into a saucepan, set it on the fire, and stir frequently; remove all the scum, allow it to boil for 1/4 hour, and pour it hot over the meat. Let the hams, &c., be well rubbed and turned daily; if the meat is small, a fortnight will be sufficient for the sides and shoulders to remain in the pickle, and the hams 3 weeks; if from 30 lbs. and upwards, 3 weeks will be required for the sides, &c., and from 4 to 5 weeks for the hams. On taking the pieces out, let them drain for an hour, cover with dry sawdust, and smoke from a fortnight to 3 weeks. Boil and carefully skim the pickle after using, and it will keep good, closely corked, for 2 years. When boiling it for use, add about 2 lbs. of common salt, and the same of treacle, to allow for waste. Tongues are excellent put into this pickle cold, having been first rubbed well with saltpetre and salt, and allowed to remain 24 hours, not forgetting to make a deep incision under the thick part of the tongue, so as to allow the pickle to penetrate more readily. A fortnight or 3 weeks, according to the size of the tongue, will be sufficient. *Time*--Small meat to remain in the pickle a fortnight, hams 3 weeks; to be smoked from a fortnight to 3 weeks. The following is from Morton's "Cyclopaedia of Agriculture," and will be found fully worthy of the high character of that publication. CURING OF HAMS AND BACON. 822. The carcass of the hog, after hanging over-night to cool, is laid on a strong bench or stool, and the head is separated from the body at the neck, close behind the ears; the feet and also the internal fat are removed. The carcass is next divided into two sides in the following manner:--The ribs are divided about an inch from the spine on each side, and the spine, with the ends of the ribs attached, together with the internal flesh between it and the kidneys, and also the flesh above it, throughout the whole length of the sides, are removed. The portion of the carcass thus cut out is in the form of a wedge--the breadth of the interior consisting of the breadth of the spine, and about an inch of the ribs on each side, being diminished to about half an inch at the exterior or skin along the back. The breast-bone, and also the first anterior rib, are also dissected from the side. Sometimes the whole of the ribs are removed; but this, for reasons afterwards to be noticed, is a very bad practice. When the hams are cured separately from the sides, which is generally the case, they are cut out so as to include the hock-bone, in a similar manner to the London mode of cutting a haunch of mutton. The carcass of the hog thus cut up is ready for being salted, which process, in large curing establishments, is generally as follows. The skin side of the pork is rubbed over with a mixture of fifty parts by weight of salt, and one part of saltpetre in powder, and the incised parts of the ham or flitch, and the inside of the flitch covered with the same. The salted bacon, in pairs of flitches with the insides to each other, is piled one pair of flitches above another on benches slightly inclined, and furnished with spouts or troughs to convey the brine to receivers in the floor of the salting-house, to be afterwards used for pickling pork for navy purposes. In this state the bacon remains a fortnight, which is sufficient for flitches cut from nogs of a carcass weight less than 15 stone (14 lbs. to the stone). Flitches of a larger size, at the expiration of that time, are wiped dry and reversed in their place in the pile, having, at the same time, about half the first quantity of fresh, dry, common salt sprinkled over the inside and incised parts;

after which they remain on the benches for another week. Hams being thicker than flitches, will require, when less than 20 lbs. weight, 3 weeks; and when above that weight, 4 weeks to remain under the above-described process. The next and last process in the preparation of bacon and hams, previous to being sent to market, is drying. This is effected by hanging the flitches and hams for 2 or 3 weeks in a room heated by stoves, or in a smoke-house, in which they are exposed for the same length of time to the smoke arising from the slow combustion of the sawdust of oak or other hard wood. The latter mode of completing the curing process has some advantages over the other, as by it the meat is subject to the action of *creosote*, a volatile oil produced by the combustion of the sawdust, which is powerfully antiseptic. The process also furnishing a thin covering of a resinous varnish, excludes the air not only from the muscle but also from the fat; thus effectually preventing the meat from becoming rusted; and the principal reasons for condemning the practice of removing the ribs from the flitches of pork are, that by so doing the meat becomes unpleasantly hard and pungent in the process of salting, and by being more opposed to the action of the air, becomes sooner and more extensively rusted. Notwithstanding its superior efficacy in completing the process of curing, the flavour which smoke-drying imparts to meat is disliked by many persons, and it is therefore by no means the most general mode of drying adopted by mercantile curers. A very impure variety of *pyroligneous* acid, or vinegar made from the destructive distillation of wood, is sometimes used, on account of the highly preservative power of the creosote which it contains, and also to impart the smoke-flavour; in which latter object, however, the coarse flavour of tar is given, rather than that derived from the smoke from combustion of wood. A considerable portion of the bacon and hams salted in Ireland is exported from that country packed amongst salt, in bales, immediately from the salting process, without having been in any degree dried. In the process of salting above described, pork loses from eight to ten per cent. of its weight, according to the size and quality of the meat; and a further diminution of weight, to the extent of five to six per cent., takes place in drying during the first fortnight after being taken out of salt; so that the total loss in weight occasioned by the preparation of bacon and hams in a proper state for market, is not less on an average than fifteen per cent. on the weight of the fresh pork. COLLARED PIG'S FACE (a Breakfast or Luncheon Dish).

Source: Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management (1861)

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