

A Method of Curing Pork When the Weather Is Too Warm for Natural Chilling

THOUSANDS of pounds of meat are lost annually in Alabama because weather cold enough for natural chilling and curing of pork does not occur with regularity. Experiments have been conducted by the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station to determine how to reduce this loss, and a successful method of chilling and curing pork by the use of ice and salt has been developed. After chilling with ice, bacon was cured successfully both in winter and in summer. In order to cure hams and shoulders during the warm months it was necessary to remove the bones from these pieces before chilling the carcass. This procedure destroyed the original shape of the ham and shoulder, resulting in a ragged slab of meat resembling bacon. Except for its rough appearance, the cured meat was desirable for food. This method was tried every month of the year with hogs not exceeding 230 pounds in weight. The fat in some of the pieces cured in July and August became rancid or strong; otherwise, all the cures were successful.

THE PLACE OF THIS METHOD IN PORK CURING PRACTICE

This method should be considered as a means of curing pork for the home meat supply under those conditions where standard methods ordinarily fail. It should prove of particular value for curing during warm winters and for lengthening the period of time during which meat may be cured on the farm. With any curing method, hot weather increases the danger of spoilage, rancid fat, and contamination by flies; and although this method may be used during the warmer months, it is recommended only for the seven cooler months from October to May.

DIRECTIONS

Selection and Slaughter of the Hog:

- (1) Select a hog weighing under 230 pounds.
- (2) Do not feed it for 24 hours before slaughter.

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(3) Be sure to secure good bleeding when the animal is killed.

(4) Clean and dress the animal as rapidly as possible.

Cutting the Carcass:

(1) Cut along both sides of the backbone and remove it just back of the ears. This may be done with an ordinary carpenter's saw or an ax.

(2) Remove the head at the point where the backbone was cut off.

(3) Lay the halves of the hog on a clean table and pull out the leaf fat and kidneys.

(4) Remove the ribs with as little flesh as possible by lifting up on them while cutting them loose from the side.

(5) Remove the front leg bones and shoulder blade together. Locate the course of these bones by pressure with the fingers. Cut down to the bones and on either side of them finally cutting them loose from underneath as they are lifted from the shank end.

(6) Remove the bones of the hind leg in the same manner. A piece of the backbone and the line bone are attached to the top of the hind leg bones. As in the shoulder, all bones are removed together. This should leave the carcass entirely free of bones.

(7) Divide each half of the hog into three parts by cutting straight across the place where the shoulder joined the side and where the ham joined the side. Trim the loose skin from the edges of these pieces to make rough squares.

(8) Cut the two jowls from the sides of the head and trim them into rough squares.

Curing:

(1) Weigh the meat to be cured. A 200- to 230-pound hog yields about 100 pounds of meat for curing which consists of the following:

- 2 Boned ham slabs
- 2 Bacon slabs
- 2 Boned shoulder slabs
- 2 Jowl squares

(2) Rub the meat with salt, paying particular attention to filling the cut places and creases with the salt.

(3) Weigh out one pound of ice for each pound of meat and crack it into egg-size lumps.

(4) Spread a layer of the ice on the bottom of a clean barrel and place a layer of meat on the ice skin side down. Follow this with a layer of ice and a layer of meat until the pack is complete.

(5) Cover the barrel and leave it in a cool place for 24 hours or until most of the ice has melted. The meat should not be left in the water until all of the ice has melted.

(6) Take the meat up and empty the ice and water. Rub the meat with salt as before and pack it down in salt in the barrel, using a layer of salt and a layer of meat. The amount of salt required will depend upon the size of the barrel and the arrangement of the pack. The bottom of the barrel should have a layer of salt and **each layer of meat should be completely covered with salt so that no two pieces of meat lie directly in contact with each other. It is especially important that the cuts and creases be filled with salt.** Packing in this way requires more salt than the meat takes up and considerable is left when the meat is cured. This may be used for additional curing or for feeding animals. A pack of this kind usually requires about one-third to one-half as much salt as the weight of meat being cured.

(7) At the end of three days take the meat up and pour off the water. Rub the meat with salt again and repack it as before. It may be necessary to use some additional salt at this time.

(8) Take the meat up at the end of four more days. Wash the surplus salt off and hang the meat for smoking.

(9) Smoking is not a factor in preserving the meat, but it improves the color and flavor. If this is desired, smoke with hard wood, such as oak or hickory, to the color desired. Smoking should be done slowly to prevent heating the meat. This will require about seven days.

The color and flavor of the meat will be considerably improved if sugar and saltpeter are used with salt in curing. However, these two ingredients increase the cost of curing and since they are not necessary in preserving the meat they are left out of the recommendations given above. If their use is desired, they may be mixed with salt in the following proportions:

Salt	20 pounds
Sugar	5 pounds
Salt peter	4½ ounces

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