

Meat Jerky

Selection of Meat

The best jerky is made from lean meat. The leaner the meat, the better the finished product. Either fresh or frozen meat can be used.

Beef. Select lean beef. Good or utility grade will be leaner than choice or prime meat. Good cuts for jerky are the flank, round, sirloin or rump cuts. Extra lean ground beef can also be used.

Game Meats. Most game meats can be used. Venison, elk and antelope make excellent jerky. Any cut of game meat can be used, but the loin, round and flank make the best jerky.

Poultry and Rabbit. Turkey breast, thighs, and legs are the best cuts for making jerky. The loin of the rabbit is also good. Be sure to skin the meat and remove all the fat.

Preparation of the Meat

The meat used for jerky should be sliced into long 3/16 to 1/4 inch slices. For a tender jerky cut the meat across the grain. For a tougher, more chewy product cut the meat with the grain. Be sure to remove all the fat possible.

For easier cutting, partially freeze the meat. Be sure to use a sharp knife. For large pieces, an electric meat slicer can be used.

Curing the Meat

The meat can either be cured using a marinade or a dry seasoning cure. Both methods work equally well.

Brine cure. The meat is marinated for at least one hour in the refrigerator in a salt-water brine to which seasonings can be added. The meat should be well drained on paper towels before placing in food dryer.

Marinade Brine

1/4 cup soy sauce	This is enough marinade for about
1 Tablespoon Worcestershire sauce	2 pounds of lean meat strips.
1 teaspoon garlic salt	
1 teaspoon seasoning pepper	
1 teaspoon liquid smoke (optional)	

Dry Cure. A mixture of dry salt and seasonings is applied directly to the meat. The meat should be refrigerated for several hours before drying so the curing salts can penetrate the meat and draw out the moisture. The meat should be patted dry with paper towels before placing on the drying racks.

Dry Cure Recipe

1 1/2 teaspoons salt	This is enough seasoning for about
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt	1 1/2 pounds of lean meat.
1/4 teaspoon black pepper or lemon pepper	

Note: If jerky is being made to take on hiking or camping trips you'll want to season it lightly. Highly seasoned salty jerky can make you very thirsty.



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Drying the jerky

The meat strips should be placed in a single layer on the drying racks. The strips should not overlap. Air circulation is very important.

It is important to use proper temperatures to destroy microorganisms. Dry jerky at 140-160 degrees F. Some people use a higher temperature during the first few hours of drying and then lower the temperature during the last part. It is a good idea to blot the meat during the drying process with a paper towel to absorb any fat that beads on the surface of the meat.

Test for doneness

Test jerky for dryness by letting a piece cool. When cool, it should crack but not break when bent. There should not be any moist spots.

Storing the jerky

Cool jerky thoroughly before packaging. Store cooled jerky in plastic freezer bags or glass jars. It is a good idea to store jerky in the refrigerator or freezer. It can be stored at room temperature for short periods of time.

Low salt and salt-free jerky

Jerky can be made without salt. The salt does help preserve the meat and draws out the moisture so reduced salt and salt-free jerky will take longer to dry and will not keep as well.

Jerky made without salt should be stored in the freezer and should be used soon after thawing. Any combination of seasonings can be used for flavor as well as the low-sodium soy sauce.

Ground Beef Jerky

- 2 pounds extra lean ground beef
- 2 teaspoons seasoning salt
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon liquid smoke
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce

Mix all ingredients well in a bowl. Line a jelly roll pan with foil or plastic wrap and spread the hamburger mixture into a layer about 1/4 inch thick. Covering the mixture with a piece of plastic wrap and then flattening with a rolling pin works well.

Put cookie sheet in freezer for about 1 hour or until the meat is firm. Cut into one inch strips with a sharp kitchen knife. Place strips in a single layer on dehydrator trays and at 140-160 degrees F. for 8-12 hours.

Note: Any combination of seasonings can be used. You can also dip strips of meat in a soy sauce marinade before putting on drying trays.

Microwave Jerky

1. Trim fat from meat.* Cut into 1/8 inch slices, cutting with the grain if possible.
2. Sprinkle with a dry cure seasoning. Let sit a few minutes so seasoning dissolves into meat.
3. Arrange 4-6 slices on roasting rack. Cover with a paper towel. Microwave 2 1/2 - 3 minutes then turn over and microwave 1 - 1 1/2 minutes more or until dry looking. It is important not to dry too much at one time.
4. Place jerky on a paper towel to cool. The jerky will become crisp as it cools.

*Flank steak excellent; also round steak, venison, rabbit and turkey work well.

Note: Any jerky recipe can be adapted to drying in the microwave by following the instructions outlined in this recipe.

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