

# BEEF JERKY

## A Method to Preserve Food Without Refrigeration

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**Meat:** Beef, turkey, game meat (venison), etc...

Obtain meat on sale for best value (often \$1.99/lb. or less).

Ask butcher to slice meat about 1/8 inch thick. (For best curing, do not slice more than 1/4 inch thick. The cure will penetrate the meat at the rate of about 1/8 inch in 12 hours and 1/4 inch in 24 hours.)

**Cure:**

**For each 2 pounds of meat**, mix together in separate bowl:

2 tsp. salt (do not use more than one level tsp. for each pound of meat)

1 tsp. sugar

1 tsp. brown sugar

1/2 tsp. garlic powder

1/2 tsp. onion powder

1/2 tsp. ground pepper

optional: other herbs or seasonings such as soy sauce, teriyaki sauce, honey, Worcestershire sauce, etc.

Note: substitute up to 1/3 with maple sugar

In a large bowl, sprinkle meat with seasonings. Toss to coat well. If desired, brush strips with a dilute solution (about 50%) of honey, soy sauce, or other liquid flavoring. Lay strips flat, stacked tightly together, in a non-metallic container with a tight fitting cover. Refrigerate 12 to 24 hours (depending on the thickness of the meat slices.)

Dehydrate meat using:

**A food dehydrator:** Lay strips flat on trays. Leave space between strips for air circulation. Rotate trays every few hours for even drying.

**An oven:** Lay strips flat on a rack. Leave space between strips for air circulation. Bake at 175-200°F until dry. (Note: Leave oven door slightly ajar to speed drying. Place a sheet of aluminum foil on lower rack to catch drippings.)

**A barbecue or smoker:** Lay strips flat on rack. Leave space between strips for air circulation. Low indirect heat (lowest setting for a gas barbecue). For smoke flavor place some moistened wood chips, in aluminum foil pan, over coals or burner. (About 15 minutes of smoking will flavor the meat.)

Meat should be darker in color and brittle as a green stick when cool (some flexibility, but will crack or break on bending). Do not over dry.

Store in an air-tight container. (Heavy weight zip-loc bags work well.)

**Explanation**

Salting and drying of foods is a method of preservation that has been used for thousands of years. The primary effect of the salt is to dehydrate the meat and to inhibit any microbes in it. We are accustomed to meats such as ham and bacon that have been salt cured and dehydrated to some degree. Fully cured hams and bacon can be kept without refrigeration. Spices and smoking adds distinctive flavors to the dehydrated meats.

Such preserved foods were important sources of protein to our ancestors as they did not have means of preserving fresh meats.