

Safety & regulatory note: home meat processing involves food safety and hygiene considerations, and requirements vary by state and by whether meat is for personal use or sale. Check with your state's food safety authority before proceeding. See our [Terms of Use](#) for more.

HOLLY'S HOMESTEAD – MEAT PROCESSING & BUTCHERY

Curing & Smoking Meat

Preserve and flavour meat using salt, time, and smoke

DIFFICULTY Moderate

TYPE Seasonal batch technique

TIME Days to weeks depending on the cure



DIFFICULTY
Moderate



TIME
Days–weeks



COST
Low–moderate



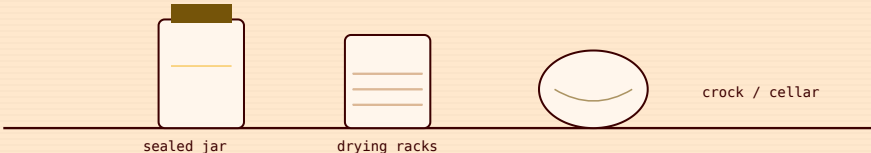
BEST SEASON
Cooler months preferred for safety



FREQUENCY
Several batches per season

01 Salt first, smoke after

Curing relies on salt (and often nitrite for safety in certain products) to draw out moisture and inhibit spoilage organisms, with smoking afterward adding flavour and a further layer of preservation.



02 What you'll need

- Curing salt appropriate to the product (plain salt for some cures, curing salt with nitrite for others — this matters for safety)
- A cool space for the curing period
- A smoker, or a simple smoking setup, if smoking
- Accurate scales for measuring cure ratios precisely

04 Troubleshooting

- **Uncertain about curing salt safety** — some products need nitrite-based curing salt for food safety (preventing botulism); always follow a tested recipe.
- **Meat too salty** — cure time or salt ratio was too high for the cut's size; measure precisely and follow tested timing.
- **Mould during curing** — some surface mould is normal on certain traditional cures, but check against reliable guidance for the specific product to distinguish safe from unsafe mould.
- **Uneven smoke flavour** — inconsistent smoker temperature or airflow; monitor and adjust throughout the smoking process.

06 Tips & variations

PAIRS WELL WITH

- Butchering Pork
- Making Sausages & Small Goods

COMMON MISTAKES

- Substituting plain salt where a nitrite-based curing salt is specifically required for safety
- Not weighing ingredients precisely, leading to an unsafe or unpalatable result

PRO TIP

Bacon (cured pork belly) is one of the most forgiving and rewarding first curing projects — noticeably better than most store-bought versions with relatively simple technique.

03 Method

1. Choose a tested, reliable cure recipe appropriate to the specific cut and product (bacon, ham, and jerky all cure differently).
2. Weigh meat and cure ingredients precisely — curing salt ratios matter for both safety and result.
3. Apply the cure and hold at a safe, cool temperature for the specified time.
4. Rinse and, if applicable, air-dry before smoking.
5. Smoke at the appropriate temperature and duration for the product, then rest and store correctly.

05 Timing & maintenance

BEST TIME	Cooler months make temperature control during curing considerably easier and safer.
DURATION	From a few days for a simple cure to several weeks for a traditional ham.
MAINTENANCE	Regular checks during curing for temperature, mould, and progress.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS	Firm texture, appropriate colour change, and a clean, characteristic cured aroma.