



Home-Smoked Bacon

There's something so very Christmassy about the earthy, comforting flavours of smoked meats and fish

Serves: 6

Prepare: 120 Hours

Cook: 3 Hours

Ingredients

For The Cure

- 1.2kg [organic pork belly](#) (for streaky bacon)
- 2kg [organic pork loin](#) (for back bacon)
- 250g sea salt
- 2 litres of water
- 1 tbsp soft brown sugar
- pinch of black peppercorns
- handful of bay leaves
- handful of juniper berries
- pinch of cloves
- black treacle (optional)
- cinnamon (optional)
- star anise (optional)
- orange peel (optional)

For The Smoker

- 90-litre galvanized metal bin
- length of strong wire
- three bricks
- mess tin
- s-hook
- firelighter
- wood chips
- wood dust

Method

For The Cure

1. In order to make bacon, you must first cure the meat. This draws excess moisture out of the cells and gets the fibres ready to soak up all that delicious smoky flavour. For streaky bacon you'll need a piece of pork belly (skin removed if you're not a fan of rind); for back bacon, you'll need boned loin
2. To wet cure the meat, make up a brine of 250g sea salt to 2 litres of water and put it in a lidded plastic container big enough for your pork. Add a tablespoon of soft brown sugar, a good pinch of crushed black peppercorns, a few bay leaves and a few roughly bashed juniper berries. You can be as coy or bold as you like with your spices and flavours. To give your bacon festive flavours, add cloves, black treacle, cinnamon, star anise and even a shaving or two of orange peel
3. When your cure's ready, pop in the meat, submerge it in the liquid and let it relax in the fridge for at least 5 days. You can go longer if you want a more deeply salted result
4. When the time's up, remove the joint from the cure, rinse it thoroughly then pat it dry. Put it on a rack in the fridge overnight to properly dry out – if it's too wet when you come to smoke it, the smoke won't penetrate so well through the meat

For The Smoke

1. If you haven't got a smoker (and let's face it, few of us do), we have a down-and-dirty way to build the necessary kit without forking out a fortune.
2. Take the 90-litre galvanized metal bin and drill two holes

- through the lid, on either side of the handle
3. Pass a length of the strong wire through the holes and securely twist the ends together. You need a tight loop that's robust enough to hold the weight of your meat
 4. Stand the bin on three bricks in a safe place, away from the house, fences or sheds
 5. Place the mess tin (the sort you'd use when camping) at the bottom of the bin. Put the firelighter inside the tin and light it
 6. Gradually pile wood chips on top until they begin to smoke. You don't want them to be burning with an active flame, just smouldering. Heap wood dust on top, again making sure to keep it just smouldering. If you've invested in a smoke generator, use it instead of the mess tin
 7. Hang your cured pork on the S-hook (you can either pierce it with the hook or use a piece of string) from the wire inside the bin lid
 8. Replace the lid on the bin and let your bacon smoke away. Keep an eye on the wood dust to ensure there's enough fuel to get the smoke coming. A couple of hours will give the bacon a delicate flavour, with intensity developing the longer you leave it. Around six hours results in something pretty special