



Local. Natural. Meaty.

**Dickson's Farmstand
Meats**

**Linked In: Sausage
Making 101**

What is sausage?

A combination of meat, fat and seasoning often (but by no means always!) put into a casing. Casings can be natural (cleaned intestines) or synthetic (collagen, cellulose or plastic)

Why make sausage?

“Here are some goats’ paunches down at the fire, which we have filled with blood and fat, and set aside for supper” – Homer’s Odyssey

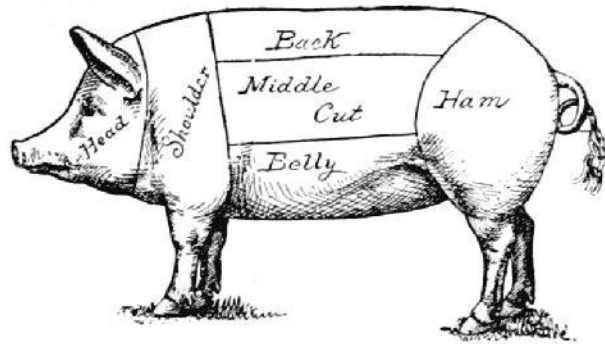
For as long as humans have been hunting and eating meat, they’ve been making sausage. Long before meat was readily available, there was a huge emphasis on using every part of the animal. Sausage making is one of the easiest ways to accomplish this. With the addition of fats and seasonings, scraps, offal and other unused meats can be transformed into delicacies. With the addition of curing, sausages are also an effective method of preservation.

Making sausage at home is no different from making them in a professional setting. Total utilization and preservation are still key. According to Michael Ruhlman, “knowing how to manipulate food gives you more freedom in the kitchen”. Think of sausages as a blank canvas on which to paint your favorite flavors. Aside from a few basic rules about lean-to-f ratios and salt and moisture content, at home, they’re completely customizable. Sausage flavors are only limited by your creativity.

Types of sausage?

- ◆ **Fresh** - Ground or chopped meat with seasonings. Must be cooked and is generally eaten hot. (Bratwurst, Italian sausages, breakfast links)
- ◆ **Emulsified** – Seasoned meat and fat mixed vigorously until the fat is evenly suspended throughout the meat and water (ex: Hot Dogs, boudin blanc, mortadella)
- ◆ **Dry - cured** – Never cooked but rendered safe through the introduction of salt, nitrates and dehydration. (ex: Salumi, pepperoni, saucisson sec)
- ◆ **Smoked** – Can be cooked (hot smoked) or uncooked (cold smoked). (ex. Andouille, Spanish Chorizo, Keilbasa)
- ◆ **Fermented** – Bacterial cultures feed on sugars in the meat releasing acids that inhibit bacterial growth (ex. Summer Sausage)

Ingredients



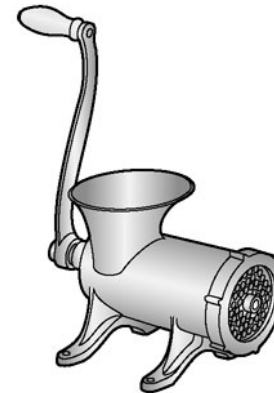
“Saying you’d love sausage if only it didn’t have so much fat is like saying you’d love water if only it weren’t so wet” – Michael Ruhlman

- **Meat** – Perhaps the best part of sausage making is that it generally requires the least expensive cuts. Shoulder is often the most popular cut due to its price point as well as its flavor and fat content.
- ◆ **Fat** – The most prized fat for sausages comes from the back and is known as Fatback. Fatback is generally the purest fat and has a clean flavor ideal for sausage making and charcuterie in general.

- ◆ **Seasoning** – Be sure to include 10 g of salt for every 450g of meat and fat. Other than that, season your sausages however you like!
- ◆ **Casing** – Not every sausage requires a casing. There are many free-form sausages and emulsified sausages that can be made into patties or broken up and tossed into pasta or make into tacos!

Techniques and Equipment

- ◆ **Grinding** – Keep your meat cold! Grinding cold meat will yield a much better texture in your final product. It’s also nearly impossible to emulsify meat that isn’t well chilled. The size of your grind will depend on the type of sausage you plan on making.



- ◆ **Seasoning** – Salt is the most important component to any type of sausage. Just like any other cooking, balance is key. A spicy sausage should have a sweet element to balance out the heat.
- ◆ **Mixing** – Most sausages can be mixed by hand. Only emulsified sausages truly require the assistance of a machine. The paddle attachment on a Kitchen-Aid works fine for small batches at home. Whether by hand or machine, make sure to mix your sausage thoroughly. If necessary, re-chill your meat to make sure it stays cold.
- ◆ **Stuffing** – Although most hand grinders can be outfitted with a stuffing attachment, a vertical tube-stuffer is a worthwhile investment for anyone looking to make quality sausages at home. You'll want to pack the chamber as tightly as possible to eliminate air pockets when stuffing the meat into the casing. Make sure your nozzle is appropriate for the casing you plan on using. Generally, you want the largest nozzle that will fit into the casing, as this will give you a more uniform sausage. Thread one whole casing onto a well-lubricated nozzle and tie a knot at the end.
- ◆ **Linking** – Link size depends on personal preference. For fresh sausages, think in terms of portion size. To link, lightly pinch each end of your desired sausage and twirl it away from you several times until the link is formed. Move onto the next section only this time, twirl towards yourself. This effectively "locks" the first link in place. Continue in this alternating manner until all of your sausage is linked.
- ◆ **Drying** – Its important to let all sausages (even fresh ones) dry after they've been stuffed and linked. Wet sausages will have a mealy texture when roasted and smoking is made more difficult as water on the casing acts as a barrier to smoke penetration. Hang your sausages on a dowel with

space for air circulation and let them dry in your refrigerator for at least an hour and ideally over night.



Cooking your sausage – Just like mixing and seasoning, cooking your sausage will depend on the type you're making.

- ◆ **Sauteeing**- With fresh sausages, it is important to use medium-low heat in order to cook them through without bursting the casing. They could crackle when they go into the pan but shouldn't sound like a steak on a grill. After browning on each side, cover them and cook for an additional 10-12 minutes.

- ◆ **Oven Roasting** – The easiest method for cooking more than a few sausages. Preheat your oven to 300°. Warm a pan with a little oil on the stove. Once your oven is warm, place the sausages into the oiled pan and place everything in the oven for 12 minutes
- ◆ **Grilling** – Most sausages need to be cooked primarily over indirect heat or else they'll burst. Start with the links

Have Fun

Sausage making can be extremely rewarding. It can also be very frustrating. In a home setting, sausage making should be a fun, stimulating and creative activity. If you're new to sausage making, start out with something simple like a fresh sausage. Once you've mastered that, you can move onto more complicated projects like emulsified or cured ones. Most importantly, don't be afraid to fail. It's the best way to learn

directly over the fire for about two minutes. Once they've taken on some color, move them to the indirect side of your grill and let them cook, covered, for about 10-15 minutes.

- ◆ **Poaching** – The most uniform but least flavor-enhancing method, poaching is best for delicate sausages like emulsified sausages with cream. Bring a pot of water to a very gentle simmer and cook for 8 minutes.

Resources and Further Reading

Books:

- ◆ *Charcuterie: The Craft of Salting, Smoking and Curing* by Michael Ruhlman and Brian Polcyn
- ◆ *Salumi: The Craft of Italian Dry Curing* by Michael Ruhlman and Brian Polcyn
- ◆ *The River Cottage Meat Book* by Hugh Fearnly-Whittingstall
- ◆ *The Art of Making Fermented Sausages* by Adam Marianski and Stanley Marianski

Supplies:

- ◆ The Sausage Maker - www.sausagemaker.com
- ◆ LEM Meat Processing - www.lemproducts.com

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