

Maple-Cured Smoked Bacon

I do recommend a smoker for this. You can try the grill if you like but you need it to be at 180 for 3 hours. Smoking foods takes practice and experimenting, but with the right recipes you might just get it right the first time. So be sure to take lots of notes.

You are going to need a non-reactive dish or container that will fit the piece of meat with at least 1 inch of space on all sides for example, plastic, stainless steel, or glass or a Ziploc bag that is big enough.

the Cure

2 ounces kosher salt (about 1/4 cup)

2 teaspoons pink salt (also called insta cure #1) check with your local butcher shop or LEM Products online

1/3 cup maple sugar or Packed Dark Brown sugar

1/4 cup + 1 tbs maple syrup (dark is OK but Grade B is best for this)

One 5-pound slab uncured pork bell skin on. (I buy 1/2 sides of pork belly (this is one whole side) and trim it nice and square and save the scraps for sausage) they are usually about 12-14 pounds depending on size.

Method

1. Combine the kosher salt, pink salt, and sugar. mix well. Add the syrup and stir.
2. Rub the cure mixture over the entire surface of the belly. Place the Belly skin side down in the non-reactive container.
3. Refrigerate, turning the belly every day (don't dump out the liquid this is good) for 6 days. I like to go 6 days whatever your preference is concerning salt you can go 5-7 days.
4. After it has been in the cure for the required amount of days. Remove it from the container or zip loc bag and rinse it very well in cold water, and dry it with paper towels. Place it on a cooling rack over a baking sheet and dry it uncovered in the refrigerator for 24 hours. This will form what is called a pellicle so the smoke flavor will have something to adhere to.
5. Hot smoke the belly with apple wood or your favorite flavor wood at 180-190 degrees F / 65 C. Until the internal temp is 145-150 degrees this will take about 3 hours. Remove it from the smoker and allow it cool long enough so that you can handle it and cut the skin off with a knife it comes off very easily. But don't remove too much of that glorious fat!!!
6. Place it in the fridge and let it cool over night if (you can wait that long) and slice it up, cook it, and eat it with my maple cinnamon French toast. It's like no bacon you've ever tasted (at least from the store anyway) I Portion mine out in 1 pound packages and vacuum pack it in the food saver.

Mine is a little sweeter and a bit stronger maple but if you want to play with different seasoning like adding cracked pepper or spice herb whatever feel free it's your choice or less sweet don't add as much sugar or syrup. Try a different type of wood like hickory or mesquite or even cherry. One thing is I wouldn't change is the ratio of meat to curing salt. The importance of the curing salt is to stop bacteria growth during the curing/ preserving stage.

Enjoy!!!!