

# Makin' the Bacon

right at home

Bacon is one of the best-loved food items in the world. Its versatility allows it to complement a dish or stand alone as the star of the plate. Even if you are not a pork lover, bacon still has a way of warming your heart and tempting your taste buds.

What might come as a surprise is that making fresh bacon from pork belly is easy to do at home.

## Why Make Your Own Bacon?

The average store-bought bacon is processed and may contain added water to increase weight, along with preservatives and artificial flavors. Given the choice, fresh homemade bacon is hands-down better tasting and better for you.

## What Is Bacon?

Bacon is made from pork belly, a cut of meat from the underside of the pig. It has a thick layer of fat just under the skin, layered with meat and thinner streaks of fat throughout. When viewed from the side, it resembles a sandwich with alternating layers of fat and meat.

The pork belly is seasoned and cured for 7–14 days and then smoked until its internal temperature reaches 155°F. The smoking process infuses flavor without fully cooking the meat while reducing the risk of foodborne bacteria.

Once smoked, the bacon can be refrigerated for up to 1 week or frozen for up to 3 months.

## So, How Do You Make Bacon at Home?

### Step 1: Choose Your Pork Belly

You can find pork belly at most grocery stores or your local butcher. Whole pork bellies weigh around 10–12 pounds and can be more difficult to work with. I prefer pieces around 2.5 pounds, which allow you to experiment with different flavor profiles. If using a whole belly, slice it into smaller slabs.

### Step 2: Gather Your Ingredients

- 1 Pink curing salt (Prague Powder #1 — not Himalayan salt)
- 2 Iodized salt
- 3 Sugar
- 4 Brown sugar or black pepper for flavor

Curing salt contains nitrates and should not be used like regular salt.

### Step 3: Prep the Meat

If the pork belly has skin on it, remove it by making a small cut between the skin and fat layer, then slowly separating it while pulling upward. Take care to leave as much fat on the meat as possible.

Weigh the pork belly in grams and record the weight.

### Step 4: Measure the Cure

- 1 Curing salt = weight (g) × 0.0025
- 2 Iodized salt = weight (g) × 0.025
- 3 Sugar or pepper = weight (g) × 0.015

### **Step 5: Cure the Pork Belly**

Coat the pork belly thoroughly on all sides, working the mixture into any creases. Place it in a ziplock bag and remove as much air as possible.

Refrigerate for 7–10 days, flipping daily. The meat is ready when it feels firm all the way through.

### **Step 6: Smoke the Bacon**

You do not need a dedicated smoker—any grill will work. Maintain a temperature of 200–225°F and use a smoke tube or similar device. Applewood pellets are a great choice.

Smoke the pork belly away from direct heat for 2–3 hours, or until it reaches an internal temperature of 155°F.

### **Step 7: Cool and Slice**

Let the bacon cool completely before slicing. Slice it as thick or thin as you prefer using a sharp knife or meat slicer.

### **Step 8: Cook and Enjoy**

Fry to your desired texture and enjoy.

### **Final Thoughts**

Experiment with flavors and find what you like best. Once you master this process, you may never go back to store-bought bacon.

Enjoy.