

HWL Kitchen Ledger - Cured Meats Series

Pancetta – Episode 1: The Cure (Full Foundations)

What We Are Doing

Curing is the controlled use of salt to remove moisture from meat, concentrate flavor, and create an environment where spoilage organisms cannot thrive.

Ingredients

Pork Belly – whole, fresh, skin on or off (weigh before starting)

Core Cure Ratios

Salt: 2.5% of total meat weight (critical)

Black Pepper: 0.2–0.3%

Aromatics: 0.5–1% total combined

Example Calculation

If pork belly weighs 1,200g → $1,200 \times 0.025 = 30\text{g}$ salt

Meat Weight	Salt (2.5%)
454g (1 lb)	11g
907g (2 lb)	23g
1360g (3 lb)	34g
2268g (5 lb)	57g

Aromatic Options

- 1 Black pepper (coarse)
- 2 Juniper berries (crushed)
- 3 Garlic (crushed)
- 4 Thyme
- 5 Bay leaf
- 6 Orange zest
- 7 Nutmeg or clove (very small amount)

Equipment

- 1 Digital scale (strongly recommended)
- 2 Mixing bowl
- 3 2.5 gallon zip bags
- 4 Refrigerator (34–38°F ideal)

Method – Step by Step

- 1 **1. Weigh the Meat:** Record exact weight in grams.
- 2 **2. Calculate Salt:** Multiply weight by 0.025.
- 3 **3. Mix Cure:** Combine salt, pepper, aromatics thoroughly.
- 4 **4. Apply Cure:** Rub all surfaces, including edges and sides. No dry spots.
- 5 **5. Bag:** Place in zip bag, remove air, seal.
- 6 **6. Refrigerate:** Store 5–7 days at 34–38°F.
- 7 **7. Daily Care:** Turn once daily and massage to redistribute cure.

What To Expect During Cure

- 1 Liquid will accumulate in the bag (normal)
- 2 Meat will begin to firm
- 3 Color deepens slightly
- 4 Aromatic scent develops

Critical Control Points

- 1 Cure must contact entire surface
- 2 Keep refrigerated at all times
- 3 Do not leave meat exposed or uncovered
- 4 Do not skip daily turning

On Curing Salt (Pink Salt)

This method uses a traditional salt-only cure. Pink curing salt is optional for whole muscle cuts and is more commonly used for ground meats and sausages.

Next Episode

Rinse, dry, and split into Pancetta Arrotoata (rolled) and Pancetta Tesa (flat), using hanging and rack methods.