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Homemade, Natural Corned Beef and Cabbage Recipe - From Scratch!

Without Sodium Nitrite or other chemical preservatives

Corned Beef is a traditional meal of Irish-Americans, especially on St. Patrick's Day, or any cold winter day. But virtually ALL of the commercial uncooked corned beef that you find in the grocery store has added sodium nitrite; which is a commonly known carcinogen when present in cooked meats. So, here's how to make your own healthier corned beef, without the added chemicals! If you need a [LOW-Sodium version of this, see this page!](#)

And it is so easy to make and is a meal in itself! It only takes about 20 minutes to prepare then about 3 hours in a large pot on the stove.

Yield / servings

Allowing 1/2 pound (250 gm) of meat per person means that the average 4 to 6 lb. corned beef available at Costco serves 8 to 12 people.

History

Corned beef is not an Irish dish; it's connection with Saint Patrick's Day occurred in America in the Irish-American culture, How so? See this page for [the history of corned beef and cabbage](#).

Traditional Corned Beef and Cabbage

Ingredients

- 1 beef brisket (4 to 6 lbs.) Do NOT buy "corned beef"; just get a plain beef brisket.
- 2 lbs. peeled baby carrots (or you can peel any carrots you have)
- 15 small potatoes (about the size of a golf ball.)
Or 6 large potatoes. Washed, not peeled. You can use larger potatoes and cut them into golf ball sized pieces or use white potatoes, too.
- 1 very large onion (like a Vidalia) , peeled and cut into ping pong ball sized pieces



- 4 cups water
- 2 cans (or bottles) of beer (Guinness would be ideal... but any beer will work)
- 1 large head of cabbage (about 2- 3 lbs.) cut into eighths quarters (4 equal pieces)
- 1/2 lb of salt, large grains, like Himalayan pink from Trader Joe's
- 2 teaspoons of thyme,
- 1/2 teaspoon of ground allspice,
- a 1 teaspoon of peppercorns, and
- 1 teaspoon of minced garlic



Equipment:

- Large pot (I use a 16 quart pot)
- cutting board
- ladle
- vegetable peeler
- Measuring cup
- knives, etc.

Directions:

Step 1 - Preparing the beef

Background: First a bit of history helps you to understand what you're doing. "Corned Beef" is called that because, historically, the Irish preserved the beef by packing it in salt. The grains of salt were large and looks like kernels of corn. So, the beef was then called "corned beef". These days, the commercial meat producers also add sodium nitrite, as a preservative to make the meat look bright red, even after it has been cooked. Unfortunately, this also greatly increased the risk of colon cancer. According to the [International Agency for Research on Cancer, ingested nitrite is probably carcinogenic to humans](#). For more information about the connection between [sodium nitrite, cancer and processed meats, in plain English, see this page](#).



But since you aren't going to be spending months crossing the Atlantic on the Mayflower, and you have a fridge and freezer, you can make corned beef without the sodium nitrite

Steps to prep the brisket

Open the bag containing the brisket by slicing one end with a knife or scissors. We're going to re-use the bag.

Rinse your fresh beef brisket in the sink under cold water and rinse out the bag.

Stab the brisket about 20 or 30 times on each side

Step 2 - Season and seal the beef, then age in the fridge

Mix the salt (1 cup) with HALF of the spices as below:

- 1 teaspoon of thyme,
- 1/4 teaspoon of ground allspice,
- a 1/2 teaspoon of peppercorns, and
- 1/2 teaspoon of minced garlic.

and then spread half of the salt/spice mixture evenly in the bag, laid in the pan.

Lay the brisket on top of the salt in the bag.

Spread the remaining salt/spice mixture on top of the meat, and seal the bag. Press the salt/spice mixture into the beef by pressing on the bag.

Press out excess air and tape it shut.

But the beef on a tray or shallow pan (in case there is any leakage) and put in the back of a cold fridge (32 - 40 F).

Now the beef simply ages for 3 to 5 days. 3 days is fine, but a couple more days is good if you have the time.

Step 3 - Day 4 to 6; Rinse the beef and chop the onion

After a few days, when you are ready to start cooking, peel and chop one large onion. Remove the beef from the fridge, and under cold running water, rinse the salt off of all sides. Discard the bag.



Step 4 - Add the onions to the pot, then put the beef on top

Put the onion pieces into the bottom of a large pot .



Step 5 - Lay the beef on the onions

Remove the beef from the packaging, do not rinse it off (it is seasoned), recover the spice packet and set it aside. Lay the whole piece of corned beef on top of the onions.



Step 6 - Add the beer and water

Add in the beer and water to the pot.

Step 7 - Add the spices

Sprinkle the spices into the pot:

- 1 teaspoon of thyme,
- 1/4 teaspoon of ground allspice,
- a 1/2 teaspoon of peppercorns, and
- 1/2 teaspoon of minced garlic.

Step 8 - Cover and cook

Cover, and turn the stove on high to bring to a boil, then turn to medium or medium low to get a steady simmer.

Step 9 - Peel and cut the potatoes

Pretty simple, wash, peel the potatoes and carrots and cut them into roughly golf ball sized pieces. Or simply use small potatoes, wash thoroughly and then there is no need to peel!



Step 10 - after 2 hours, add potatoes and carrots

After 3 hours add the potatoes and carrots. and put the cover back on.



Step 11 - Prepare the cabbage and add it

Peel the outer leaves and wash the cabbage. Cut the cabbage into 8ths, cutting through the stem (it helps to hold it together in the pot). At 2.5 hours (in other words, a half hour after you add the potatoes and carrots) add the cabbage. (If you put it in earlier will become mushy!)



Step 12 - After a total of 3 hours, it is done!

After 3 hours, it is done! The meat should be tender and start to fall apart as you cut it.





The potatoes, carrots and cabbage should be tender.



Other traditional St. Patrick's Day dishes:

- [Irish stew](#)
- [Potato soup](#)
- Guinness stout (beer) or any beer dyed green

Other Traditional Irish foods:

- [Irish Stew](#)
- [Irish Soda Bread.](#)