

Sausage Making

Contributed by alison

Daunted by DIY bangers? Don't be. Alison shows you how...

Why we use what we do!

We make our own sausages at home for many reasons; some of them being, we are using our own free range pork, produced in a way that we can control, with pigs who have lived a happy life, doing all the things that pigs love doing. We can control all of the ingredients and flavours in our sausages, and choose the cut of meats we use.

When making small batches of sausages we use the Kenwood mixer, with the mincer attachment and the sausage-stuffing end.

We use our own free-range pork, which we feed organically, but aren't registered with the soil association, as the membership is too expensive for us to bother with. If buying meat from the butcher most cuts can be used, but we always use the shoulder and the belly. The shoulder gives us a good fleshy joint and the belly gives us the fat needed in a good sausage.

I buy my rusk directly from the butcher, as he buys it in big sacks and will sub divide one for me. Cultivating a good butcher is good for this! Conversely rusk can be made by drying bread crusts in the remnants of the heat in an oven, or the bottom of an aga, then either bashed, in a bag with the rolling pin (which only works if totally dry), grated, or blitzed in a food processor.

The sausage skins are bought from various places (listed below), and can be either lambs intestine (for chipolatas) hogs casings (for sausages, and pictured) or collagen, although none are suitable for vegetarians. The collagen skins are tougher, in our opinion than the animal skins once cooked.

Herbs and spices, or flavourings can be fresh or dried.

Liquid could be water, cider or wine.

Preparing the skins.

The lamb intestine or hogs casing skins arrive in a tub covered in salt. The skins in lengths and tied together with string, and are usually in a bit of a tangle. They are eased out of the tangle and then soaked in cold water. We do this overnight so they are well soaked and the salt is washed off.

When ready to use the skins are washed off again then clean water is scooped through one end and run through the whole skin to the other end, to wash out the inside too.

Making Sausages

Firstly, after setting up the mincer I mince all the meat on the coarse plate, having diced it all first.

The porket nozzle is then added to the mincer and the skins are threaded onto the nozzle so it is concertinaed onto the nozzle with a little bit of end hanging off the end.

The meat is then mixed by hand with the added flavourings and liquid added.

At this stage, with a new recipe you would be wise to cook a little patty of the mixture up to see if you like the final flavour.

The meat is then minced again with the sausage-stuffing nozzle and skin on.

Slowly run the mincer with the meat mixture coming through the skin. The size of sausage can be changed slightly by adjusting the the speed of the meat coming through, with the machine, and by holding very lightly the end of the nozzle where the meat is coming through.

Once a length of sausage has been made it is best to aim the line of sausage into a big bowl, like a clean washing up bowl to catch it, until it is ready to be twisted.

Problems with making sausages.

There are a couple of problems that can occur while making sausages, and it is better to be prepared for these.

Problem 1. Not enough mixture going into the casings, and the sausage being filled with air. Solution – Stop the mincer and slowly and carefully pull the skin back onto the stuffer end, having squeezed the sausage meat mixture gently to the end of the skin, then restart the mixer to carry on.

Problem 2. The skins splitting. Stop the mixer, squeeze the mixture to make up the right diameter sausage, in the last sausage, and then tear off the skin, and start the next long tube of sausage.

The casings do not want to be so big and tight that the tube will not be able to be twisted, as the sausages will just burst. To get the feel for this experience helps a lot.

Finally to get the final bit of mixture into the last skin, once the casings are all filled, and the mixture is used up put an old crust through the mincer and you will fill up one more sausage.

The sausages can then be twisted and hung for 24hours to dry out a bit before using, or batching up for freezing. We either wrap the sausages up in parchment paper, if they are going straight into the fridge for later use, or bag into strong butchering bags that we get from a butchering supply shop (found in the yellow pages), or I am sure your local butcher can get you some. These are stronger than normal bags and will cut down on freezer burn.

My Favourite Recipes

Basic quantities – for most sausages.

80% Pork

2.5% Seasoning

6.5% Rusk

11% Water

Seasoning can be added by taste, but these are tasty combinations. (Some of these suggestions have been suggested on Downsizer, where I have since tried them.)

Pork and Leek – 1 medium leek to 1kg of pork.

Pork and apple – a good sized grated bramley apple to 1Kg of pork.

Pork and Bacon

Tomato, chilli and garlic

Scarborough Fair - Pork sausage mix with generous handfuls of chopped parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme.

Strawberry Fair - As above, but also add sorrel, lemon balm and chervil (and any other herbs in the garden that need using).

Juniper - Pork sausage mix, with ground up dried juniper berries, added at about a dessert spoon full per kilo. An outstanding casserole sausage.

And finally, my absolute favourite.

Cumberland Sausage

4 1/2 lbs lean shoulder pork

1 1/2 lbs fat belly pork

6 gr sage

pinch of marjoram

25 gr white pepper

75 gr salt

100 gr breadcrumbs

Mince meat coarse. Mix in the rest and stuff.

Suppliers

Check the Yellow Pages for Butchery supplies.

Casings

Natural Casing Company Ltd - <http://www.naturalcasingco.co.uk/pricelist.pdf>

Another source for casings is <http://www.weschenfelder.co.uk>

Your local butcher – Make him your best friend!

Casings and Equipment

Franco from www.sausagemaking.org

Ascott Smallholding Supplies Ltd - <http://www.ascott.biz/>_____