

THE GREATNESS of A BRINE

Brining is the process of submerging a cut of meat in a brine solution, which is simply salt dissolved in water. The meat absorbs extra liquid and salt, resulting in a juicier and more flavorful final dish. This technique is particularly great for lean cuts of meat that tend to dry out during cooking!

A sweetener such as sugar, molasses, honey, or corn syrup may be added to the solution for flavor and to improve browning.

How to Brine

The rule for preparing a brine is 1 cup of salt (Kosher or Sea) per 1 gallon of water.

A helpful tip to combining the two is to add the salt to hot water first to dissolve it. Trying to dissolve salt in cold water is like trying to churn your own butter. If you dissolve the salt in warm water first, you can add additional cold water until you have reached the required amount. Make enough to completely cover your meat completely.

Make sure the brine is at room temperature or colder before placing in the meat, never place meat in a warm/hot brine.

Once your brine is mixed you can add additional ingredients. Many smokers like to add sweeteners to help balance the salt, common sweeteners are sugar and honey. If you want to enhance the texture, consider using vinegar, wines, or citrus, but the most common ingredients are seasonings such as garlic, paprika and thyme.

A classic brine for chicken includes about 2 tablespoons each of garlic, onion, pepper, thyme (all ground) and paprika and 1 cup of vinegar per gallon of brine. This is great for whole chicken.

Meat flavored with a brine usually requires several hours of soaking. A general rule of thumb is to soak the meat in the salt bath, covered completely, for 1 hour per pound. Place the meat in the refrigerator during this time. Once the soak time is over, remove the meat from the brine, rinse it and pat it dry. It's important to rinse the meat to remove the excess salt, if you forget this step, you may find your meat may taste salty.