

# BACON

Bacon is a cut of meat taken from the sides, belly, or back of a pig that has been cured, smoked, or both. Meat from other animals, such as beef, lamb, chicken, goat or turkey, may also be cut, cured, or otherwise prepared to resemble bacon. Bacon may be eaten fried, baked, or grilled, or used as a minor ingredient to flavor dishes. The word is derived from the Old High German *bacho*, meaning "back", "ham", or "bacon".

The USDA defines bacon as "the cured belly of a swine carcass"; other cuts and characteristics must be separately qualified (e.g., "smoked pork loin bacon"). "USDA Certified" bacon means that it has been treated for trichinella.

In continental Europe, bacon is used primarily in cubes (lardons) as a cooking ingredient, valued both as a source of fat and for its flavour. In Italy, bacon is called pancetta and usually cooked in small cubes or served uncooked and thinly sliced as part of an antipasto. Bacon is also used for barding and larding roasts, especially game birds. Many people prefer to have bacon smoked using various types of woods or turf. This process can take up to ten hours depending on the intensity of the flavour desired.

## In the English Speaking World

A side of unsliced bacon is a *fitch*, while an individual slice of bacon is a *rasher* (United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Australia and New Zealand) or simply a *slice* or *strip* (North America). Slices of bacon are also known as *collops*. Traditionally, the skin is left on the cut and is known as *bacon rind*, but rindless bacon is also common. In the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland, bacon comes in a wide variety of cuts and flavours. In the United States, ordinary bacon is made only from the pork belly, yielding what is known in Britain as "streaky bacon", or "streaky rashers". In Britain, bacon made from the meat on the back of the pig is referred to as *back bacon* or *back rashers*. It usually includes a streaky bit and a lean ovoid bit, and is part of traditional full breakfast commonly eaten in Britain and Ireland. In the United States, back bacon is called *Canadian-style bacon* or *Canadian bacon*, but this term refers usually to the lean ovoid portion. In Canada, it is called *peameal bacon*, whereas *bacon* is used generally to refer to strip bacon, which is more common to the Canadian diet.

## In Asia

In Korea, one of the most popular cooked meats is grilled unsmoked pork belly called *samgyeopsal*, literally "three layered meat". Like most traditional meat dishes in Korea, it is grilled at the table, cut into small pieces with scissors when partly or wholly cooked, and eaten communally. Koreans prize samgyeopsal meat with a high fat content, and pay a premium for meat that is especially fatty.

## In Mexico

Bacon from the indigenous South American peccary is said to be one of the favoured dishes of Quetzalcoatl, an Aztec sky and creator god.

## Bacon used as Topping

In the U.S. and Europe, bacon is often used as a condiment or topping on other foods. Streaky bacon is more commonly used as a topping in the U.S., on items such as pizza, salads, sandwiches, hamburgers, baked potatoes, hot dogs, and soups. Back bacon is used less frequently in the United States, but can sometimes be found on pizza, salads and omelets. Bacon bits are chopped pieces of pre-cooked bacon intended to be sprinkled over foods, particularly salads. Imitation "bacon bits" made of texturized vegetable protein flavoured to resemble authentic bacon bits are also available.

## Health Concern

A 2007 study by Columbia University suggests a link between eating cured meats (such as bacon) and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The preservative sodium nitrite is the probable cause.

## Grease

Bacon grease, also known as bacon drippings, is the grease created by cooking bacon. When bacon is cooked, its fat naturally melts, releasing a highly flavorful grease. Bacon grease is traditionally saved in southern U.S. cuisine and used as an all-purpose flavoring for everything from gravy to cornbread to salad dressing.

One teaspoon (4 grams) of bacon grease has 38 calories. It is composed almost completely of fat, with very little

additional nutritional value. Bacon fat is roughly 40% saturated. Despite the health consequences of excessive bacon grease consumption, it remains popular in the cuisine of the American South.

## Nutrients

Select nutritional data from types of bacon in the USDA National Nutrient Database:

	Streaky Bacon Raw	Streaky Bacon Cooked	Canadian Style Bacon Cooked	Hormel Canadian Style Bacon
Amount	1 slice	1 slice	2 slice	1 serving
Total Weight (g)	29	8	47	56
Water (g)	3.57 (12%)	0.99 (12%)	29 (62%)	40.85 (73%)
Calories	157	43	87	68
Total Fat (g)	12.12	3.34	3.97	9.45
Saturated Fat (g)	3.984	1.099	1.335	1.025
Cholesterol (mg)	32	9	27	27
Sodium (mg)	670	185	727	569
Protein (g)	10.74	2.96	11.39	9.45

## HAM

Ham is the thigh and rump of pork, cut from the haunch of a pig or boar. Although it may be cooked and served fresh, most ham is cured in some fashion.

Ham can be dry-cured or wet-cured. A dry-cured ham has been rubbed in a mixture containing salt and a variety of other ingredients (most usually some proportion of sodium nitrate and sodium nitrite). This is followed by a period of drying and aging. Dry-cured hams may require a period of re-hydration prior to consumption. A wet-cured ham has been cured with a brine, either by immersion or injection. The division between wet and dry cure is not always hard-and-fast as some ham curing methods begin wet but are followed by dry aging.

Dry-cured varieties include Italian prosciutto crudo (prosciutto di Parma, prosciutto di San Daniele, prosciutto di Carpegna, prosciutto di Modena, prosciutto Toscano, prosciutto Veneto Berico-Euganeo, Valle d'Aosta Jambon de Bosses, prosciutto di Norcia) and the Spanish Jamon serrano and jamón ibérico. The United States has country ham (including Virginia ham), which might or might not be smoked. England has the York ham. Germany's Westphalian ham is usually smoked over juniper, in Belgium there is the smoked Ardennes ham, and from China there is the unsmoked Jinhua ham. In Bulgaria the specific Elenski but is produced. In Iran, the dry-cured Zard K h ham is produced. Ham is also processed into other meat products such as spam luncheon meat.

## Regional Use

### Belgium

Jambon d'Ardenne is a dry-cured, smoked ham from the Ardennes region of Belgium. It has PGI status under EU law.

### France

Bayonne Ham or Bayonne is an air dried salted ham that takes its name from the ancient port city of Bayonne in the far South West of France (Le Pays Basque or the Basque country).

Jambon de Paris is a wet-cured, boneless ham and baked in shape. The ham is of superior quality product prepared from fresh, unfrozen pork thighs without adding polyphosphates.

## Germany

Black Forest ham, known as Schwarzwälder Schinken, is from the Black Forest region of Germany. It is seasoned, dry cured, then smoked over sawdust and fir brush.

Westphalian ham is created from pigs raised in the Westphalian Forest and fed acorns. The resulting meat is dry cured and then smoked over a mixture of beechwood and juniper branches.

## Italy

In Italy, ham is called prosciutto, and can be either raw (prosciutto crudo) or cooked (prosciutto cotto).

Earliest evidence of ham production in Italy comes from the Republican Roman period (400-300 BCE).

Modern Italian and European Union legislation grants a protected designation of origin to several raw hams, which specify where and how these types of ham can be produced. There are several such hams from Italy, each one with a peculiar production process. Parma ham, the so called Prosciutto di Parma, has almost 200 producers concentrated in the eastern part of Parma Province. Its production is regulated by a quality consortium that recognizes qualifying products with distinctive mark. Only larger fresh hams are used (12-13 kilograms). Curing uses relatively little salt, but can include garlic salt and sugar producing a sweeter meat. After salting, the meat is sealed with pig fat over the exposed muscle tissue, which slows drying. Curing occurs over a minimum 12 months. This curing method uses only salt, without nitrates and without spices. No conserving substances added. San Daniele ham (Prosciutto di San Daniele) is the most similar to Parma ham, especially the low quantity of salt added to the meat, and is the most prized ham. Other raw hams include the so called "nostrani" or "nazionali" or "toscani", they are more strongly flavoured and are produced using a higher quantity of salt.

## Portugal

In Portugal, besides several varieties of wet-cured hams called fiambre (not to be confused with the Guatemalan dish, also called fiambre), the most important type of ham is presunto, a dry-cured ham similar to Spanish jamón and Italian prosciutto. There is a wide variety of presuntos in Portugal; among the most famous are presunto from Chaves and presunto from Alentejo (made from black iberian pig; see also pata negra).

## Romania

In Romania, ham is called unc / onc/jambon. Usually dry cured, always with granular salt, in Transilvania and Banat paprika might be added.

## Spain

One of the more exacting ham regulatory practices can be found in Spain, where ham is called Jamón. Not only are hams classified according to preparation, but the pre-slaughter diet and region of preparation are considered important. Spanish regulators recognize three types of Iberico ham qualities:

- Cebo or Campo hogs are fed only commercial feed.
- Recebo hogs are raised on commercial feed and fed acorns for the last few months of their lives.
- Bellota hogs are fed a diet almost exclusively of acorns (bellotas).

The regional appellations of Spanish ham (Jamón serrano) include the following:

- a) Pedroches with Protected Denomination of Origin, from Córdoba (Andalusia).
- b) Huelva, a full-flavored ham made in Huelva (Andalusia).
- c) Jabugo, a small village in Huelva bearing Spain's largest high quality ham industry.
- d) Guijuelo, Gredos and Béjar, from Salamanca (Castile).
- e) Extremadura, made in Cáceres and Badajoz.
- f) Cured ham of Trevélez, cured at least 1,200 meters above sea level. Cured hams from Trevélez are qualified to be among the "sweetest" cured hams due to the low degree of salting necessary for the drying and maturing processes to succeed properly. This is caused by the north winds coming from the high tips of Sierra Nevada.
- g) Teruel, cured at least 800 meters above sea level, with a minimum of a year of curing and aging (Serran Ham).

## United States

In the United States, ham is regulated primarily on the basis of its cure and water content. The USDA recognizes the following categories:

Fresh ham is an uncured hind leg of pork. Country Ham is uncooked, cured, dried, smoked-or-unsmoked, made from a single piece of meat from the hind leg of a hog or from a single piece of meat from a pork shoulder. Smithfield ham, a country ham, must be grown and produced in or around Smithfield, Virginia, to be sold as such.

For most other purposes, under US law, a "ham" is a cured hind leg of pork that is at least 20.5% protein (not counting fat portions) and contains no added water. However, "ham" can be legally applied to such things as "turkey ham" if the meat

is taken from the thigh of the animal. If the ham has less than 20.5% but is at least 18.5% protein, it can be called "ham with natural juices". A ham that is at least 17.0% protein and up to 10% added solution can be called "ham—water added". Finally, "ham and water product" refers to a cured hind leg of pork product that contains any amount of added water, although the label must indicate the percent added ingredients. If a ham has been cut into pieces and moulded, it must be labelled "sectioned and formed" or "chunked and formed".

Sugar is common in many dry cures in the United States. The majority of common wet-cured ham available in U.S. supermarkets is of the "city ham" variety, in which brine is injected into the meat for a very rapid curing suitable for mass market. Traditional wet curing requires immersing the ham in a brine for an extended period, often followed by light smoking. Traditional wet cured ham includes the English Wiltshire ham and the French Jambon de Paris.

In addition to the main categories, some processing choices can affect legal labelling. A 'smoked' ham must have been smoked by hanging over burning wood chips in a smokehouse, and a "hickory-smoked" ham must have been smoked over hickory. Injecting "smoke flavour" is not legal grounds for claiming the ham was "smoked". Hams can only be labelled "honey-cured" if honey was at least 50% of the sweetener used and has a discernible effect on flavour. So-called "lean" and "extra lean" hams must adhere to maximum levels of fat and cholesterol per 100 grams of product.

One of the most popular and expensive hams in the United States is Smithfield or Virginia ham. Through a special curing process Smithfield ham ages. In that time a fungal coat forms over the outside of the ham while the rest of the meat continues to age. This process produces a distinctive flavour, but the fungal layer must be scrubbed off the ham before being cooked or served.

Turkey ham, a boneless product made from pressed dark meat, a popular low-fat alternative to traditional ham in the US.<sup>[1]</sup>

A spiral-slicing process has become popular for boneless hams sold by delicatessens in the US.

All hams start out as a roast from the hind leg of a hog. This is called a fresh ham. Before it is prepared it is no different than any other pork roast. How it gets to be a ham is something of a complicated story.

Hams are prepared in several different ways. They can be aged, cured, smoked or cooked. The ham you get at the store is generally wet or brined cured. This process involves injecting the ham with a combination of salt, sugar, sodium nitrite, sodium nitrate, sodium erythorbate, sodium phosphate, potassium chloride, water and flavorings. The ham is then cooked to a temperature of 150 degrees F. The combination of the chemical brine and the cooking will kill off bacteria and make a ham.

Now aging is a different process and does not necessarily require a brine or smoke. Hams are hung in a special room with exact temperature and humidity controls. Hams can spend as much as 5 years aging and will come out coated in a hard mold crust. Of course you scrap off and wash the ham before you eat it. It might not sound terribly appetizing but these hams can sell for a lot of money. Aging is done at about 75 degrees F to 95 degrees F at a humidity level of 55%-65% for at least 45 days. You need good air circulation to keep the surface of the meat dry to reduce mold growth.

Cold smoking is the way to smoke a ham. Cold smoking is done at temperatures under 100 degrees F and can go on for days or even weeks. Because the temperature is so low, bacteria is controlled by chemicals in the smoke and the slow drying process. A cold smoked Ham does require salt curing (typically in a brine) to keep the bacteria under control while the ham cures.

Many hams are prepared through a combination of these processes. The Smithfield Ham, which can sell for \$7 to \$15 a pound uses all of the above ways to preserve meat. If you want to make your own Smithfield Ham start with the hind leg of a hog raised entirely on a diet of peanuts, brine in a saltwater mixture for 1 to 2 months, smoke for a week and then let age for another 6 months. See why they cost so much?

So you can't put a fresh ham in your smoker and have it for dinner that night? Sure you can, but it won't be a ham in the way you think of ham. It would be much more like a smoked pork shoulder or southern style pulled pork.

Though it might sound complicated you can prepare your own cured, aged and smoked ham, just plan far in advance. Some of the links on the right can give you step by step instructions to curing a ham. If you prefer to hot smoke you ham use the instructions for pulled pork.

So maybe you don't want to go to all this. There are several ways to dress up a prepared ham that will add flavor and improve the quality of you ham. Normally when you want to serve you precooked ham for a formal gathering you push in a dozen or so whole cloves, top with pineapple slices, glaze with a nice mustard sauce and bake in your oven at 350o for a couple of hours, depending on the size. Well, this will get the ham hot and add some flavor but if you really want to dress up the ham try it on the grill or in the smoker. For some ideas try either Honey Glazed Smoked Ham or Maple-Mustard Ham.

# SALAME

Salami is cured sausage, fermented and air-dried. Historically, salami has been popular amongst Italian peasants because it can be stored at room temperature for periods of up to a year, supplementing a possibly meager or inconstant supply of fresh meat.

## Etymology

The English *salami* is a misspelled form of the Italian word *Salame*. Being also the Italian plural form, today the word "salami" may refer specifically to a class of salumi, where an individual sausage or style of sausage (e.g. *salame di Felino*) would be referred to with the singular form *salame*. In general English usage, salami may be singular or plural and refer to any kind of cured meat of vague Italian origin or to various specific regional styles from Italy or elsewhere, such as France or Germany. The word originates from the word *Sale* (=salt) with a termination *-ame* used in Italian as an indicator of collective nouns; the original meaning was thus *all kind of salted (meats)*. The Italian tradition of cured meats including several styles, the word specialized soon to indicate only the most popular kind, made with ground salted and spiced meat forced into animal gut with an elongated and thin shape, then left to undergo some kind of fermentation process.

## Ingredients of salami

A traditional salame (singular), with its typical marbled appearance, is made from one or more of the following meats:

- pork, chopped beef, venison, poultry, goose, lamb, goat

Additional ingredients include:

- minced fat
- wine
- salt
- various herbs and spices

The raw meat mixture is usually allowed to ferment for a day and then the mixture is either stuffed into an edible natural or non-edible artificial casing and hung to cure. The casings are often treated with an edible mold (*Penicillium*) culture as well. The mold is desired as it imparts flavor and prevents spoilage during the curing process. Most salami have the mold or the casing removed before being sold in international markets. Purists insist that the mold should be left intact.

More modern (but still traditional) mixtures include additional ingredients to assist in the fermentation process. These ingredients aim to take the guesswork out of traditional curing and can be found in many of the finest salami varieties in the world, although some producers eschew the nitrates and nitrites due to health concerns.

- nonfat dry milk
- dextrose
- lactic acid bacteria starter culture
- ascorbic acid
- sodium nitrite
- sodium nitrate

## Varieties of Salami

Varieties of salami include:

- Cotto salami - a soft, cooked salami with the same taste look and feel to Bologna.
- Genoa
- Fegatelli
- Finocchiona
- Pepperoni
- Sopressata
- Saucisson sec (French "dry sausage")
- Winter salami

- German Salami
- Italian Salami Milano

Many Old World salami are named after the region or country of their origin. Examples include Arles, Genoa, Hungarian and Milano salame. Many are flavored with garlic. Some types — including a few varieties from Spain, most Hungarian types (Pick salami), and southern Italian styles (such as pepperoni, derived from *salsiccia Napoletana piccante*) include paprika or chili powder. Varieties are also differentiated by the coarseness or fineness of the chopped meat as well as the size and style of the casing used.

In the United States, traditional salami are either imported or referred to as an "Italian Salame", the protected term for salami made in the United States.

## Manufacturing Process

Though uncooked, salami are not raw; they have been prepared via curing. The term *salame cotto* refers to salami cooked or smoked before or after curing. This is done to impart a specific flavor but not to cook the meat. Before curing, a *cotto salame* is still considered raw and is not ready to be eaten. Most kinds of salami made from donkey or ox are considered "cotto".

Salami are cured in warm, humid conditions in order to encourage growth of the bacteria involved in the fermentation process. Sugar is added as a food source for the bacteria during the curing process, although it tends not to be added to horse meat due to the latter's naturally high levels of glycogen. Lactic acid is produced by the bacteria as a waste product, lowering the pH and coagulating and drying the meat. The acid produced by the bacteria makes the meat an inhospitable environment for other, dangerous bacteria and imparts the tangy flavor that separates salami from machine-dried pork. The flavor of a salami relies just as much on how these bacteria are cultivated as it does on quality and variety of other ingredients. Originally, the bacteria were introduced into the meat mixture with wine, which contains other types of beneficial bacteria; now, starter cultures are used. The whole process takes about 36 weeks, although some age it more for additional taste, and some can cut it down to about 24 weeks for a sweeter taste.

The curing process is determined by the climate of the curing environment and the size and style of casing. After fermentation, the sausage has to be dried. This changes the casings from being water-permeable to being reasonably airtight. A white covering of either mold or flour helps prevent the photo-oxidation of the meat and rancidity in the fat. Under some conditions the nitrate are produced by the breakdown of proteins. Salt, acidity, nitrate levels and dryness of the fully-cured salami combine to make the raw meat safe to consume.