

Hobble Creek Hog Leg - Recipe

By Chuckwagon

(for a complete discussion of this process, see Chuckwagon's writings on the website)

Brining Cure For 14 lbs. Of Boiled Ham

- 1/2 gallons ice water (32°F.)
- 60 grams Cure #1 (also called Prague Powder #1, Instacure #1 or "pink salt" #1)
- 226.7 grams (1/2 pound) of salt (not iodized)
- 2/3 cup powdered dextrose

Make the brine by adding the Cure #1 and the salt to the icewater and stirring it until the salt becomes dissolved. Inject 10% of the meat's weight in brine. Pour it into a plastic cup, weigh it, and inject it in several places throughout the entire ham, but only into meaty muscle. Don't worry about injecting the fat as it cannot be cured using sodium nitrite.

Having injected the ham, submerge it in the remaining brine, (called a "pickle"), for 4 to 5 days at near as 38° F. as possible. Longer brining will produce a more salty product. This step removes the threat of some notoriously dreadful bugs...

Following a week's brining, the ham should be ready to cook. Generally, this type of ham is not smoked. However, it is your choice and may be done at this point. DO NOT soak the ham in fresh water before smoking or cooking it. Simply rinse it off, pat it dry, and begin smoking it (if desired) by preheating your smoker to 140° F. and introducing smoke for several hours.

Immediately following this step, place the ham into a suitable cooking utensil whereby it may be covered with 170° water and maintained at that temperature until the internal meat temperature reaches 150°F. Again, most hams of this type are never smoked. Lots of people mistakenly believe that smoking a ham cures it. Smoking meat absolutely does NOT cure it. This "preparatory" cooking is part of the curing process, and may take some time. Be patient and don't try to rush the cooking. Use a probe type thermometer with a timing alarm to alert you when the meat has cooked. Note that as the temperature surpasses 138°F. (59°C.), any possibly existing trichinella spiralis are destroyed. At 150°F. (66°C.), the ham becomes fully "prep cooked" and the threat of "crypto" has been removed.

Next, cool the ham with cold running water, pat it dry, and then refrigerate it until it is finally cooked by any number of means to a finishing-serving temperature of 160° F.

Put it into a refrigerator as soon afterward as possible until you reheat it for serving. Use sterile plastic gloves to handle it, and make sure the shelves in your smoker are clean too, or simply hang it while smoking. Remember, in order to smoke the ham, it must be dry to the touch. Use your smokehouse to maintain the ham's IMT at 140°F., the upper edge of the bacterial "danger zone".

When preparing the ham for dinner, please note that the FSIS suggests using a minimum 325°F. oven and serving it when the IMT reaches 160°F. For a moister ham, some folks even re-introduce it into boiling water before serving it. Of course microwaves or countertop appliances may be used as well. This ham is actually best having rested a couple of days. Be sure to wrap the ham tightly in butcher paper and keep it refrigerated. As this is a fully-cooked and cured product, it is perfectly safe to slice cold for sandwiches.