

Serbian Sausage

Via a personal communiqué from “Radi” Markovic

This fermented, dried sausage recipe and another which follows were kindly provided by a young lady who was our Tour Leader for Grand Circle Cruise Line while we were on a trip down the Danube River from Budapest to Bucharest in 2016. She is Bulgarian, married to a Serbian husband, a delightful and outgoing woman who can charm the socks off any man in the Balkans, including old American tourists like me. This recipe is her husband’s translation handiwork, from a Serbian recipe. I include their charming English, clarifying where I can.

Warning: this sausage recipe requires advanced techniques and equipment in addition to the usual grinding and stuffing equipment- - ten days of cold smoking, followed by several weeks of curing under controlled temperature and humidity conditions. It is best done during winter months. Do not attempt it unless you have the equipment available. The original Serbian way, which involves using natural bacteria and hanging from rafters to dry, will give variable results depending on weather and cleanliness of the preparation and storage areas. In particular, without using cure #2, you risk botulism if cold smoking or curing/storing above 40 degrees F (4 degrees C). Cure #2 is cheap, so don’t skimp on it.

Sausage makers from each region swear that theirs is the best, mainly because their paprika is the best. If you can’t obtain regional paprika, at least buy the good stuff. If there is no country of origin listed, do not buy it.

Note the similarity to other sausages of this region. I have only changed two items: (1) added cure #2 consistent with American and western European practice, so as to reduce the risk of botulism. (2) introduced T-SPX bacteria for fermentation, so that we can ensure that “good” bacteria take over instead of whatever happens naturally.

Use of cure #2 is highly advisable, if not mandatory. Use of bacteria is useful, but not always possible due to the need for keeping the bacteria frozen until used. While not absolutely necessary, using T-SPX introduces consistency and a safety factor. The choice is yours. As it comes available, I hope that Eastern European home sausage makers will also adopt the use of cure #2, and optionally the bacterial technique if they can.

Ingredients

- 10 kg Pork – (best meat from the neck, back, or around the ribs) [*fatty pork. Use pork butt and add fat back to get 30% or so fat content*]
- 220 gm salt [*cut to 200 gm if using cure #2*]
- (25 gm cure #2 if used)
- (1.2 gm T-SPX bacteria if used)
- 40 gm black pepper powder
- 50 gm red sweet paprika powder
- 50 gm red hot paprika pepper
- 2 cloves garlic
- Thin pork intestines hose (as much as needed) [*hog casing*]

Preparation

Pork meat need to be minced together with garlic. *[If using bacteria, add a small amount of distilled or purified (chlorine free) water to activate them.]* After mincing, *[rest of ingredients]...* are added and all together is mixed by hands at least half an hour till everything is mixed nicely. *[Mix well, until primary bind is achieved. Ignore the half hour instruction.]*

When everything is mixed nicely, filling of the intestines hose can start. It can be done by hand, small spoon or spritz and there should be no air left inside the hose. *["Hose" refers to the intestine, of course. Wash out salted casing per instructions, and use a sausage stuffer or grinder with stuffer tube. Wear gloves. Keep the mince cold. Stuffing by hand is difficult, especially for controlling temperature and air content.]* After every 35 to 40 cm intestines hose should be twisted on both ends so 35 to 40 cm long sausage can be formed.

This way prepared sausage can be used in many meals or baked in pan. *[If cooked immediately (treated as a fresh sausage), it is not necessary to include the cure #2.]*

Sausages can be smoked as well, leaving them first two days as they are and after that smoke them on a cold smoke and that process lasts around 10 days. *[Many recipes use beech wood. Due to the long smoking time, bacteria will cause the sausage to ferment. This is part of the process. However, cure #2 is a necessity if botulism is to be avoided. A practical temperature limit for the cold smoking process is about 80 degrees F, 27 degC. Lower would be better. A good target would be 20 degrees C / 68 degrees F.]*

Also hanging them somewhere where they can be exposed to a breeze it's a very good way to make them dry. On the balcony or at the attic. This process is a bit slow, sausages are ready when they are completely dry and hard on touch and this process can last up to two or three weeks. *[A better solution is to use a curing chamber constructed from an old refrigerator with temperature and humidity control. A good target for curing would be 14 degC / 57 degF and 85% humidity until 40% weight loss is achieved.]*