

Herbed Sausage with Spicy Mustard

Here, pork is flavored with sage and parsley, two common sausage seasonings, but you can vary the herbs according to what you like, such as basil, thyme or tarragon. You can also select a different mustard. These sausages are especially good with sliced heirloom tomatoes.

To make the spicy mustard, in a small bowl, stir together the Dijon mustard, chives and brown mustard. Cover and set aside until ready to serve.

To prepare the sausage, working in batches, pulse the pork in a food processor until coarsely ground. Transfer to a large bowl. Add the sage, parsley, onion and Dijon mustard. Using a spice grinder or a mortar with a pestle, grind the peppercorns and mustard seed to a fine to medium texture. Add the ground spices and salt to the pork mixture. Using a wooden spoon, mix well to combine. Shape the mixture into patties about 4 inches in diameter and ½ inch thick. You will have 10 to 12 patties.

In a large fry pan over medium-high heat, warm the olive oil. Add the sausage patties and cook until browned underneath, 3 to 4 minutes. Turn the patties over and cook until browned on the other side, 3 to 4 minutes more. Using a slotted spatula, transfer to paper towels to drain briefly.

Arrange the patties on a warmed platter and serve immediately, accompanied by the spicy mustard. Serves 6 to 8.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Essentials of Breakfast and Brunch*, by Georgeanne Brennan, Elinor Klivans, Jordan Mackay and Charles Pierce (Oxmoor House, 2007).

Apple and Sausage Patties

Adding grated apple to bulk pork sausage yields tangy, flavorful breakfast patties. Easy to make, they are a nice alternative to ready-made sausages and are an interesting addition to a breakfast buffet.

In a bowl, combine the sausage, apple, bread crumbs, cream and egg yolk and stir until well blended. Stir in the salt and pepper. Divide the mixture into 12 equal portions and shape each portion into a patty 2 inches in diameter and ¼ inch thick. Arrange the patties on a rimmed baking sheet or tray and refrigerate for 15 minutes, or cover tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. Bring to room temperature before cooking.

Preheat an oven to 200°F.

Place a large fry pan over medium-low heat and lightly brush it with canola oil. Place 4 of the sausage patties in the pan and cook until browned underneath, about 3 minutes. Turn the patties over and cook until browned on the other side and cooked through, about 4 minutes more. Transfer the patties to an ovenproof dish and keep warm in the oven.

Cook the remaining patties in the same way, oiling the pan between batches. Keep warm until ready to serve. Arrange the patties on a warmed platter and serve immediately. Serves 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Entertaining*, by George Dolese (Oxmoor House, 2004).

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Beyond Pork and Beef

Once you have mastered the technique of grinding pork and beef, you can apply the same rule to other meats, such as lamb, venison and veal, as well as chicken and turkey. Choose fattier cuts, such as lamb shoulder. If the cut is lean—veal is the leanest of all—incorporate additional fat from the same animal or fatback (pork) until the mixture is about 20 percent fat by weight. Here are some flavoring suggestions:

Lamb: rosemary, pine nuts, oregano

Venison: juniper berries, dried cherries, ancho chili powder

Veal: lemon zest, tarragon, paprika

Chicken: chives, tarragon, dried apples, walnuts

Turkey: dried cranberries, sage, chestnuts

Seafood: traditionally a combination of minced or chopped (rather than ground) salmon, shrimp, scallops and herbs, along with egg whites

Ingredients for Herbed Sausage with Spicy Mustard

For the spicy mustard:

1 cup Dijon mustard

2 Tbs. snipped fresh chives

1 tsp. hot brown mustard

For the sausage:

1¼ lb. boneless pork butt, cut into large chunks

3 Tbs. minced fresh sage

¼ cup minced fresh flat-leaf parsley

2 Tbs. minced yellow onion

2 Tbs. Dijon mustard

2 tsp. peppercorns

1 tsp. mustard seed

1½ tsp. salt

1½ Tbs. olive oil

Ingredients for Apple and Sausage Patties

1 lb. bulk pork sausage

1 tart green apple, peeled, cored and grated

¼ cup fine dried bread crumbs

2 Tbs. heavy cream

1 egg yolk

½ tsp. coarse salt

¼ tsp. freshly ground pepper

Canola oil for cooking

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Technique Class: From Scratch—Sausage

In the United States, pork is the most commonly used meat for making sausage. Knowing how to identify high-quality pork is very important. The most crucial attribute to recognize is the extent of the marbling. This will be your primary clue as to how tasty the meat will be. But don't be afraid to ask your butcher questions: How was the pig raised? Was it allowed to roam free in a pasture? Was its diet mostly grass and wild forage, or was it fed grain? If you know such essential information, you can make the best choice for the recipe you are preparing.

Conventional Pork vs. Heirloom Breeds

Worldwide, pork is the most popular meat on the table, but in the United States, consumers' avoidance of pork due to a concern for dietary fat prompted producers to breed leaner pigs. They fed the animals a restricted diet and confined them to feedlots. Because of this market-driven trend toward leaner meat lacking intramuscular fat, some of the qualities appreciated in traditional pork were lost. Lean pork has little flavor, and the lack of marbling can make it dry and chewy after cooking. Heirloom breeds such as Berkshire, Duroc and Yorkshire have become more widely available. Due to the pigs' varied diet, their meat is rich tasting, juicy and tender.

Identifying Fresh Pork

Pork ranges in color from very pale pink to a rosy hue. In general, the more color, the better the flavor. Pale pork, a sign of poor quality, signals that the meat will lack flavor and dry out easily. The marbling and exterior fat should be perfectly white, never yellow, and the surface of the meat should be springy and moist, not wet. When it comes to freshness, let your nose be your guide. Ask your butcher to let you examine the cut you need. If purchasing wrapped meat, check the sell-by date. When you get home, unwrap the meat and check the smell: if it smells off, return it to the store.

Safety

Fear of trichinosis, caused by a parasite, once dictated that pork be cooked to an internal temperature of 160°F. Trichinosis is actually killed at 137°F, and therefore the widely accepted doneness temperature for pork is now 145°F. Well-marbled cuts such as the shoulder will maintain their juiciness when slowly cooked to a higher temperature, but leaner cuts such as the loin will dry out quickly when cooked above 145°F.

Making Sausage: How to Grind Meat at Home

Cooking the sausage: In a large nonstick or well-seasoned fry pan over low heat, warm 2 tsp. canola oil. Add the sausages and cover the pan. Cook for 20 minutes, turning the sausages every 5 minutes or so. Uncover, increase the heat to medium-high and cook the sausages, turning as necessary, just until they are evenly golden on all sides and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center of a sausage registers 155°F. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate to drain.

Making Sausage: How to Grind Meat at Home

You can grind meat and make sausage in your kitchen without having a devoted grinding machine or a supply of meat casings. This method calls for coarsely grinding small batches of semifrozen meat cubes in a food processor. The mixture is then blended with seasonings to make free-form sausage that can be used right away in a wide range of recipes. Or it can be formed into shapes and frozen.

Choosing the meat: Almost any cut of meat may be ground, but meat from the shoulder is the tastiest because of its supply of fat. If you select meat from any area other than the shoulder (for beef, this cut is known as “chuck”), you will need to compensate for the lower fat content. Otherwise, the sausage will be dry and won’t hold together during cooking. Sausage should be about 20 percent fat by weight. Pork shoulder and beef chuck are naturally composed of that much fat. For leaner cuts, like loin, add bacon, fatback, salt pork or fat trimmed from a roast.

Preparing the meat: Cut the meat into 1-inch cubes and place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. The cubes should barely touch. Freeze until firm but not rock solid, about 25 minutes.

Grinding the meat: Working with about one-third of the meat cubes at a time, and leaving the remaining cubes in the freezer until needed, scatter the cubes evenly in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a very sharp metal blade. You want the blade to cut right through the fat without smearing it. Pulse, in 2-second bursts, about 12 times, until the meat is just coarsely chopped. You may have to remove the top of the processor and redistribute the meat to achieve an even chop. Transfer to a chilled bowl and grind the remaining meat.

Mixing and forming the sausage: Prepare the seasoning ingredients and add to the bowl holding the ground meat. Use a fork to blend the ingredients together thoroughly without compacting the meat. With clean hands, gently and quickly pick up the mixture and form shapes, if desired. Place on a plate and refrigerate for 1 hour to firm. *Continued at left*

Basic Sausage

Grind the pork as directed in this brochure and transfer to a chilled bowl. In a mini food processor, combine the fennel seeds, coriander, salt, black pepper and red pepper flakes. Process to a paste. Transfer the seasoning mixture to the bowl with the ground pork and mix with a fork. Use the sausage as is, or form into patties, torpedoes or other shapes as directed in your recipe. Makes 2 lb.

Variations:

Cilantro-Chili Seasoning: In a mini food processor, combine ½ to 1 jalapeño chili, seeded and chopped; leaves from ½ bunch fresh cilantro, finely chopped; and 1 Tbs. each fine sea salt and freshly ground pepper. Add 2 Tbs. dark beer and the seasonings to the ground meat and mix.

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Porcini-Sage Seasoning: In a small bowl, soften ¼ oz. dried porcini mushrooms in hot water for 20 minutes. Drain, squeeze dry and coarsely chop. In a food processor, combine the porcini; 2 shallots, sliced; 2 garlic cloves, sliced; leaves from 1 bunch fresh sage, sliced; 1 Tbs. fine sea salt; and 2 Tbs. freshly ground pepper. Add 2 Tbs. dry white wine and the seasonings to the ground meat and mix.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *The Cook and The Butcher*, by Brigit Binns (Weldon Owen, Inc., 2011).

Fennel-Chicken Sausage Patties

Fennel seed is a traditional spice in Italian sausages, which are made with pork. These patties, made with chicken, include both minced fresh fennel as well as fennel seeds for added flavor and texture. Chicken breast meat is quite lean, so bacon is added to provide the fat needed for moisture and to ensure the patties will hold together when they are shaped and cooked.

Cut off the stems and feathery leaves from the fennel bulb. Discard the outer layer of the bulb if it is tough and cut away any discolored areas. Quarter the bulb lengthwise and cut away any tough base portions. Mince the fennel.

In a fry pan over medium-high heat, warm the 2 tsp. olive oil. Add the fennel, sprinkle with the pinch of salt and cook, stirring, until translucent and soft, 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from the heat. When the fennel is cool enough to handle, transfer to a paper towel and squeeze out the moisture. Place in a large bowl.

Using a box grater set over a bowl, grate the apples. Working in batches, place the grated apples on a paper towel and squeeze out the moisture. Set aside.

Working in batches, pulse the chicken in a food processor until coarsely ground. Add to the bowl with the fennel. Pulse the bacon until coarsely ground and add to the bowl. Using your hands or a wooden spoon, mix well to combine. Using a spice grinder or a mortar with a pestle, grind the fennel seed, coriander seed, peppercorns, nutmeg and the 1½ tsp. salt until finely ground. Add the ground spices, cayenne and grated apples to the chicken mixture and mix well until combined. Shape the mixture into patties about 4 inches in diameter and ½ inch thick. You will have 10 to 12 patties.

In a large fry pan over medium-high heat, warm the 2 Tbs. olive oil. Add the sausage patties and cook until browned underneath, 3 to 4 minutes. Turn the patties over and cook until browned on the other side, 3 to 4 minutes more. Using a slotted spatula, transfer to paper towels to drain briefly.

Arrange the patties on a warmed platter and serve immediately. Serves 6 to 8.

Note: To make a complete meal, serve the sausages in the Italian style with sautéed bell peppers and onions. Shape the sausage mixture into ovals and cook as directed. Transfer to a plate. In the same pan, sauté 2 sliced large red onions and 3 sliced bell peppers (a mix of colors) until tender. Then deglaze the pan with 2 Tbs. balsamic vinegar. Serve the vegetables alongside the sausages.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Essentials of Breakfast and Brunch*, by Georgeanne Brennan, Elinor Klivans, Jordan Mackay and Charles Pierce (Oxmoor House, 2007).

Ingredients for Fennel-Chicken Sausage Patties

1 small fennel bulb

2 tsp. plus 2 Tbs. olive oil

Pinch of salt plus 1½ tsp.

2 Granny Smith apples, peeled and cored

1½ lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into large chunks

¼ lb. bacon

2 tsp. fennel seed

1 tsp. coriander seed

2 tsp. peppercorns

½ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg

½ tsp. cayenne pepper