



## Maple Cured Hickory Smoked Bacon

Makes about two pounds

by Jeremy Niehuss, Executive Chef

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### Cure

- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon pink salt (sodium nitrite)
- 2 tablespoons, packed, dark brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 2 teaspoons thyme leaves removed from the stems
- 10 bay leaves, crushed
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 2 teaspoon black peppercorns, cracked
- 2 ½ pounds slab pork belly

1. To make the cure combine all of the ingredients in a small mixing bowl. Rub the cure over the entire pork belly, coating all sides equally. Work the cure into the meat by gently massaging and rubbing it in with your fingers. Place any excess cure that falls off on top of the belly.
2. Place the belly in a large zip lock bag and seal it tightly. Place the belly in a small dish just big enough for it. The cure will cause water to release from the belly and form a brine. It is important that the belly be kept in contact with the brine at all times. Refrigerate it for at least seven days, before checking. Once a day, flip the belly and then rub it without removing it from the zip lock bag. This daily process is called overhauling.
3. After seven days check the belly for firmness. If it feels firm at its thickest point, it is cured and ready to dry. If it still feels soft and squishy, then it needs to cure for another day or two.
4. Once the belly is finished curing remove it from the bag and rinse it with cold water. Pat it dry with a clean kitchen towel. Place the pork belly on a baking sheet tray with a wire rack. Refrigerate uncovered for 24 hours to dry the belly and prepare it for smoking.
5. Hot smoke the belly with hickory wood chips to an internal temperature of 150° F, about three hours. Let the bacon cool and then refrigerate until it is cold. Once cold, wrap tightly with plastic wrap and freeze for up to six months or refrigerate for up to two weeks.

**Equipment:** Cutting board and knife, measuring cups, measuring spoons, small mixing bowl, large one gallon zip lock bag, small casserole dish, clean kitchen towel, baking sheet tray with a wire rack and a meat thermometer.