

# How Can You Make Beef Jerky in a Microwave Safe and Effectively?

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Traditionally, making homemade jerky requires equipment such as an oven or a dehydrator in order to turn a beef piece into a drier item with an acceptable texture. Thanks to newer technologies in the kitchen, it is now possible to make beef jerky by directly using a microwave drying machine. It is fast and efficient because the drying time is reduced. Unlike in the past, it can now be made even on a tight schedule for homemakers with little time or money.

Traditional Method vs Microwave Method

Traditionally, making beef jerky is processed by curing salt to keep the meat and then marinating it with a sauce mixture for a few hours. After syrup is absorbed and excess salt is reduced, beef is dried slowly at a low temperature, which could take several hours or a whole day according to the thickness of slicing and the temperature. However, it is just a matter of minutes using a microwave drying machine. Microwave drying machines use an electromagnetic wave for making water molecules in meat heated up rapidly, causing water molecules to vaporize and meat to dry quickly.

**Benefits of Using a Microwave Drying Machine** The main benefit of using a microwave drying machine for preparing beef jerky is the time and effort saved during the drying process. For those that need to prepare a snack quickly, using a microwave drying machine instead of a dehydrator or oven is an appealing option. The time saved by microwaving can also make this method more energy efficient. Another benefit to preparing your beef jerky in a microwave drying machine is the safety it provides, as the shorter cooking time reduces the risk of bacterial growth. You just have to make sure you are using your microwaving to the correct temperature settings.

This remarkable technology saves time but preserves the nutritional content of the meat, keeping vitamins and minerals that could be lost due to slow cooking.

## Essential Ingredients and Preparation

In order to make some delicious microwave beef jerky, you will need a few cooking supplies and several preparation steps to make it turn out right. Here are the supplies and the preparation for cooking:

#### List of Ingredients Needed for Making Microwave Beef Jerky:

**Lean beef:** Go for cuts like top round, sirloin tip or flank steak: the more fat a cut has after it's cooked, the leaner it will be. Fat does not dehydrate, and can foster microbial growth, meaning a fatty slice of jerky will mould faster.

**Marinade ingredients:** This could be anything you'd like, just enough to add some flavour (eg, 1/2 cup Worcestershire sauce or Worcestershire sauce, 1 tbsp liquid smoke, 1 tsp black pepper, 1/2 tsp garlic powder, 1/2 tsp onion powder, and a sweetener such as 2 tbsp brown sugar or 2 tbsp honey).

**Curing salt (optional):** helps prevent bacterial growth during the dry process and will extend the shelf life of the jerky.

#### Preparing the Meat: Selecting the Right Cuts and Slicing Techniques

**Proper selection:** Choose a pound of freshly butchered lean meat with as little bone and fat as possible. Fat goes rancid fast, especially when being 'cooked' in the hot, dry microwave drying machine.

**Slicing:** Slice the meat in an even, consistent manner that is 1/8 to 1/4 inch thick. If it is difficult to cut to the desired thickness, try freezing it partially. Thicker cuts will take more time to dry. If your jerky varies as shown below for beef jerky, choose a smaller meat cut (such as eye of round, flank steak, sirloin) and slice as evenly as possible (to speed up the cooking process, ensure equal cooking, and prevent overcooking thin pieces).

#### Marinating Tips to Enhance Flavor and Tenderness

**Marinate for flavour:** Mix the marinade ingredients and soak the meat strips in the mixture for at least 2 hours in the refrigerator; ideally, overnight for maximum flavour. The marinade's acidic elements (vinegar or lemon juice, for example) will tenderise the meat.

**Ensuring even marination:** Make sure that all pieces are submerged in the marinade and in a refrigerator while marinating to avoid bacterial growth.

**Patting dry with paper towels:** It's a good idea to get the beef fairly dry with the paper towels because water evaporates faster than naked water, so this reduces the 'fight' the microwave has to go through to dry out your meat.

This is an important part to do so that your microwave beef jerky tastes good as well as safe to eat it. These are the good preparations before making neat jerky and keep your jerky last longer and clean.



## Step-by-Step Guide to Microwaving Beef Jerky

There are a few particular steps involved in making beef jerky in a microwave to make sure that the meat dries as equally as possible without becoming too cooked.

Here is how you can use your microwave dryer to produce jerky:

Step 1: Setting up your microwave for drying meat

Get the microwave ready: Remove anything from the microwave that shouldn't be there and clean out the inside or risk having some rogue flavour or strong smell from a paste or sauce leach from its walls into your jerky.

Use microwave-safe racks or trays: Spread the meat on microwave-safe racks or trays arranged so that at least one side of the meat is not touching anything else. Racks and trays fitted for microwave ovens are available but mine weren't microwave-safe, so I used skewers and chopsticks to suspend the meat over a microwave-safe plate.

Step 2: Arranging the meat on microwave-safe trays

Arrange meat strips in the tray or rack: Lay shelf-stable meat strips out flat on the rack without overlapping. It can be daunting, but aim for even spacing. If you want to use a microwave tray that requires turning meat over, then you'll need to space them even more. This will ensure that they are exposed to microwave energy on both sides.

Where to position in the microwave: Put the plate in the middle of the microwave so it will dry evenly. If your microwave has a turntable, make sure it can easily turn without any obstructions.

Step 3: Adjusting microwave settings for optimal drying

**Power settings:** Put your microwave on low power or the defrost setting. Jerky takes a long time to dry, and if your dish gets too hot, it will cook the meat quickly and unevenly.

**Timing:** Microwave in 2-3 minute intervals at a time, resting it in between to distribute the heat evenly throughout the meat. Consult the timer to see if the meat is still too raw or has become dry.

**Repeat as necessary:** Nuke in short bursts and check frequently. Drying time – the mother of all estimations – varies according to your microwave's wattage and the thickness of your meat strips. My strips were somewhere in between thin and medium, and it took between 20 and 60 minutes.

**Monitor and finish:** If the jerky is drying well, its intervals will have to shorten as they progress, and you should stop before it dries or burns by checking if the jerky is firm to the touch, dry around the edges and still pliable. If you just followed the steps above, you can make safe-to-eat beef jerky that is close in texture, taste, and smell to the traditional cut but faster.

## Safety Tips for Making Beef Jerky in a Microwave

When jerking up the meat, making beef jerky in a microwave some key safety practice should be a top priority. This is to make people won't sick by food borne diseases, and also ensure a better produce. The following are key safety tips you ought to put in place when making beef jerks in a microwave.

### Ensuring Proper Meat Handling to Avoid Contamination

**Cleanliness:** Make sure you have a clean area, clean utensils, and clean hands so that you are less likely to introduce bacteria into the meat from your immediate environment.

**Thawing:** If frozen, thaw safely in a refrigerator, not at room temperature where bacteria can multiply.

**Marination:** Keep the meat refrigerated when marinating. Refrigeration stops pathogenic microorganisms causing food poisoning from growing, and stops the acids in the marinade degrading the meat.

### Guidelines for Determining When Beef Jerky is Fully Dehydrated

**Texture:** Good dehydrated jerky should feel leathery and have a bit of springiness to it, not be brittle. It should have a uniform colour, with no pink spots – any pink spots should be avoided, as those are likely areas that are not cooked enough.

**Doneness test:** To see if your jerky is done, cool a piece at room temperature for 5 minutes; if it bends without cracking in half but doesn't break cleanly, it is sufficiently dried.

**Safety checks:** Err on the side of over-drying rather than leaving it under-dried; under-dried jerky can contain harmful bacteria.

### Storing Microwave Beef Jerky to Maintain Freshness and Prevent Spoilage

**Cool it before storing:** Cool it down thoroughly before you package it. Warm jerky can condensate moisture in jars or other containers, leading to mould and spoilage.

**Airtight containers:** Place the jerky in clean airtight containers. For best results, vacuum-seal to preserve freshness, life and quality.

**Storage:** Store in an air-tight dry container in a cool, dry place. For long-term storage, keep in a refrigerator or freezer to help preserve quality and prevent spoilage.

By following these safety guidelines, you ensure that your microwave jerky does not make you sick while keeping it delicious and nicely preserved. By taking care in how you cook, dry, and store your food, you end up with homemade jerky that is both safe and enjoyable to eat.

## Troubleshooting Common Issues

Making beef jerky in a microwave is not always what it seems. This is a guide to common errors you may encounter, plus tips on how to fix them to prevent the moldy, bitter beef jerky you want to avoid.

**What to do if the jerky isn't drying evenly**

**Rearrange the strips of meat:** Remove the meat from the microwave every 20 minutes or so to also rearrange the strips. This way, pieces at the back are given a fresh keep of heat.

**Position foolproof:** If possible, place the thicker (or moister) pieces toward the outer edges of the microwave tray where they will absorb more energy, and move the thinner (or drier) pieces toward the centre.

**How to fix overly dried or tough jerky**

**Pay close attention:** Because we don't want to overcook the jerky we have to check it often, especially as it reaches the time it should be finished. Every microwave is different in the amount of power they use so an adjustment by observation is a must.

**Cut down the length of the drying bursts:** If your jerky starts drying too quickly, cut down the time you leave between microwave bursts. Shorter intervals allow you to control the drying process more precisely and thus lessen the likelihood of hardening.

**Adjusting marination and microwave settings based on meat type and thickness**

**Adapt the marination:** Different cuts of meat and various slices of thickness might demand a modification of the time of marination. Meats that are thicker, or cleaned from a harder form of meat, might demand longer marination so that not only the flavours penetrate, but so that the meat is soft enough.

**Microwave power setting:** If your jerky isn't drying equally well or to your expectations, try using a lower power setting for a longer time. This should give more uniform gentle drying than a higher setting.

With these microwave beef jerky troubleshooting tips in mind, your jerky will be that much better. Jerky is science and half art, and sometimes you have to tweak things in order to get them right.

## Enhancing Your Microwave Beef Jerky Experience

Now that you know the tricks of the trade for making microwave beef jerky, experiment with flavours and ingredients to add it to recipes and take your microwave beef jerky to the next level. Here's how to take your microwave jerky to the next level:

**Creative Flavoring Ideas: Trying Different Marinades and Spices**

Kick up the global flavour: Define that upped flavour however you like and then marinate along those lines. If you like Asian flavours, then work with soy sauce, sesame oil and ginger. If you're drawn to Mexican flavours, try chipotle peppers and lime juice.

Sweet and salty pairings: Balance the inherent meatiness of the jerky with sweet ingredients. Honey, maple syrup or even the juices of pineapple or apple all create delicious dichotomies.

Herb and spice blends: Don't hold back with bold herbs and spices. Above all, classic herb blends with rosemary and thyme work well, but don't be afraid of something adventurous, like curry powders or garam masala.

### Serving Suggestions to Enjoy Your Homemade Beef Jerky

As a snack: Microwaving beef jerky makes for a great high-protein, low-fat snack on its own, or as an addition to other snacks for on-the-move activities like hiking and camping.

With cheese and crackers: Make a platter of your DIY jerky, pairing it with cheeses and artisan crackers for a hearty rustic snacking.

In sauce: Cube and use like bacon to enhance the flavour and meatiness of a sauce. In soups, stews and salads: Diced (minus the fat), it can be used to add texture and bite – a nice surprise, chewy yet delicately flavoured morsel.

### Pairing Your Jerky with Complementary Snacks and Dishes

Jerky pairings: Think about what drinks are complimentary to your jerky flavour profile. Bold flavoured jerky will pair nicely with a craft beer or big red wine and more mild jerkies will meld well with a lighter beer or cocktail.

Complementary sides: next to your jerky, serve up other store-bought homemade salty snacks, such as roasted nuts, home-made vegetable chips, or pretzels.

Creative applications: Take jerky and use it as an ingredient in a larger dish – perhaps a salty addition to a breakfast omelette, or a hearty topping for a baked potato.

I hope these weirdo ideas help you get a bit more enjoyment out of your nostril-searing microwave beef jerky, transforming another dull hunk of sustenance into a sensory dialogue and adventure. Microwave beef jerky is an inherently boring food, an end-of-the-day stopgap that we should revere – every batch a tabula rasa, every batch an opportunity to do something different – as the enthralling platform it actually is.<sup>11</sup>