

Traditional Corned Beef and Cabbage: The Fail-Proof Recipe for Fork-Tender Results

Mastering the Art of Homemade Corned Beef



TIME
30 min

TEMP
195°F

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INGREDIENTS

1 Gallon Water: Divided into 1 quart for heating and 3 quarts for cooling.

1 Cup Kosher Salt: This is the "corn" in corned beef (referring to the large salt crystals).

$\frac{1}{2}$ Cup Brown Sugar: To balance the saltiness and add a hint of caramel depth.

1 tbsp Pink Curing Salt #1 (Optional): This keeps the meat pink and prevents spoilage during the long brine.

5 Garlic Cloves: Smashed to release their oils.

2 tbsp Pickling Spice: A blend of peppercorns, mustard seeds, coriander, and allspice.

2 Bay Leaves: For that essential herbal aromatic base.

4-5 lb Beef Brisket: Look for a "flat cut" for uniform slicing.

1 lb Potatoes: Red or Yukon Gold work best.

1 lb Carrots: Large chunks to withstand the simmer.

1 Small Cabbage: Cut into sturdy wedges.

Swaps and Notes:

The Meat: If you can't find brisket, a bottom round roast can work, though it won't be quite as silky as the fat-marbled brisket.

Curing Salt: If you omit the pink curing salt (sodium nitrite), your beef will turn a grayish-brown color when cooked (like a pot roast). It will still taste delicious, but it won't have that classic "red" corned beef look.

Pickling Spice: If you don't have a pre-made mix, you can DIY one with black peppercorns, mustard seeds, crushed red pepper, and a few cloves.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

Phase 1: The Brine (5-7 Days Before):

Dissolve: In a large pot, combine 1 quart of water with the salt, brown sugar, and curing salt. Heat over medium heat, stirring until everything is completely dissolved.

Infuse: Add the smashed garlic, pickling spices, and bay leaves.

Cool: Add the remaining 3 quarts of cold water to the pot to bring the temperature down. **Crucial:** The brine must be completely cold before you add the meat.

Submerge: Place your brisket in a large, non-reactive container (a glass dish or a heavy-duty gallon freezer bag works well). Pour the brine over the beef. If the meat floats, weigh it down with a heavy plate.

Wait: Refrigerate for 5 to 7 days. Every day, give the meat a little flip to ensure even curing.

Phase 2: The Cook:

Rinse: Remove the beef from the brine and rinse it thoroughly under cold water to remove excess surface salt. For a less salty finish, soak the meat in fresh cold water for 30 minutes before cooking.

Simmer: Place the brisket in a large pot and cover with fresh water by at least 2 inches. Do not boil vigorously! Bring it to a boil, then immediately reduce to a very low simmer.

Tenderness: Cover and simmer for 3 to 4 hours. You are looking for an internal temperature of roughly 195°F or until a fork slides in and out with zero resistance.

Vegetables: If you're making a full meal, add your potatoes and carrots during the last 45 minutes of cooking. Add the cabbage wedges in the final 15 minutes.

Tips for Success:

Slicing is Everything: Always slice against the grain. Look at the long muscle fibers and cut perpendicular to them. If you cut with the grain, the meat will be stringy and chewy.

Don't Rush the Brine: Five days is the minimum. If you pull it out too early, the center of the brisket will just taste like plain roast beef.

Temperature Control: If the water is boiling too hard, the meat will become tough and rubbery. Keep those bubbles small and gentle.

Serving Suggestions and Pairings:

Nutritional Information (Per Serving):

Calories: 380 kcal

Protein: 28g

DIRECTIONS

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13. **Serving Suggestions and Pairings:** Corned beef is a salty, savory star that needs bright or creamy partners. I love serving this with a side of spicy mustard or horseradish cream.
14. **If you're hosting a party, this makes a great "heavy" main alongside lighter appetizers like my baked kosher salami.** If you want a truly decadent spread, serve some beer cheese dip with rye bread slices on the side.
15. **Nutritional Information (Per Serving):** Calories: 380 kcal
16. **Protein:** 28g
17. **Fat:** 24g
18. **Carbohydrates:** 4g (excluding vegetables)
19. **Sodium:** 1200mg (varies based on rinsing)
20. **Storage and Leftover Tips: Fridge:** Store leftovers in an airtight container for up to 4 days.
21. **Freezer:** Corned beef freezes beautifully. Wrap it tightly in plastic wrap and then foil; it will stay good for 3 months.
22. **The : Best Leftover Hack:** Chop up the beef and toss it into a Dorito casserole for a wild, salty-crunchy fusion dinner that the kids will actually eat!
23. **More Recipes You Will Love:** Easy Turkey Wings for Lazy Sundays
24. **Homemade :** Beer Cheese Dip
25. **Baked :** Kosher Salami Appetizer

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