



# Cooking Your Way Through a Half Hog

## Tips and Recipes

---

By Hilary Elmer  
Between the Trees Farm

---

# MEET YOUR FARMER

---



Have you ever felt like all the food at the grocery store is harmful, and you just want something to eat that will nourish your family without causing problems? Me too.

Hi, I'm Hilary. I grew up eating junk food. After having two kids, my body was falling apart and my kids were unhealthy. I knew that the food we were eating was a big part of the problem and I was determined to grow food that would allow us to thrive. No more garbage. Only good food.

I raise my animals on the same principle. They live out on the land living the life nature intended. They eat the food that they were designed to eat. That is why the food from them nourishes you and makes you feel great. No garbage. Only good.

# Custom Cutting 101

## Getting the most out of your half hog.

Custom butchers usually cut up a hog into the same cuts you are familiar with: pork chops, sausage, ham, bacon, maybe a roast. If you want to get some cuts that aren't commonly found in the grocery store, and learn how to make fuller use of your meat with some traditional recipes, then use this guide to help you take it to the next level.

### Shoulder

This is where you get the Boston butt (I know, it seems like the wrong end of the animal), picnic roast, and blade steaks/country style ribs, shank and brisket.

The Boston butt is big and meaty and contains the flat, oddly shaped shoulder blade. Left whole, it is an enormous roast (which is amazing smoked and made into pulled pork), Or you can have the Boston butt cut into smaller pieces. The neck loin (the cylindrical coppa muscle) can be fileted out from between the shoulder blade and the vertebrae and dry cured into mouth watering cappicola, or the coppa could be treated as a boneless roast. The remainder of the butt after you remove the coppa has the flat shoulder blade in it. You can leave it as a flattish shoulder blade roast, or have it cut into country style "ribs".

The picnic roast is usually left as a roast unless you want lots of meat for grinding into sausage. It makes great pulled pork.

You can have the shank cured and smoked to be cooked similar to a ham hock. It makes amazing bean soup. The small section of ribs found in the shoulder has the brisket attached, and you can ask your butcher to give you those ribs with the brisket still on them. Slow cooked, it's absolutely delicious.

### Middle Section

This is where you get the bacon (pork belly), ribs and the loin.

Pork belly is what bacon is made out of. A pork belly from a half hog averages 10 pounds. Most butchers will cure it and smoke it as bacon if you want, or you can ask for it to be left as fresh belly for you to make into bacon yourself or to try different recipes with. You can ask for fresh pork belly to be packaged in one or two pound pieces, if you want to try different recipes, or whole if you want to make the whole thing into bacon.

Spare ribs are a standard cut, you don't have to ask for them. However, if you want baby back ribs, you will need to specify so. Otherwise these little guys get left on the loin and become part of the bone found in pork chops. If you ask for baby backs to be packaged separately, that will leave you with boneless pork chops from your loin.

If you want a loin roast, rather than making all of the loin into chops, you can have some or all of it left in larger portions for loin roast/s.

## Ham Region

Obviously this is the part that yields the ham, but it also contains a shank (the ham hock) and the sirloin.

If you want a big holiday ham, you can have the entire ham cured as one big piece with the bone in the middle. It's usually 10 – 15 pounds. If that's too much, but you still want a holiday ham, you can ask for it to be cut for a half-ham/boneless ham. This is a smaller portion that is still a nice size for serving at a big meal. Ask for it to be cured and smoked, if you want the classic ham flavor. If you do a boneless ham, the rest of the ham portion that was removed will most likely be made into sausage.

You can choose ham steaks rather than the whole-ham or half-ham options. For ham steaks, they take the big ham and slice it cross wise rather than leaving it whole. "Fresh ham steaks" means that they have not been cured or smoked. Or, if you want it to have the classic ham flavor, request the ham steaks to be cured and smoked.

As with the front shank, you can ask for the rear shank/ham hock to be cured and smoked if you want to make bean soup with it. (Unless you get a full sized ham, in which case the shank is left on the ham.)

The rear portion of the loin, the sirloin, can be cut up into sirloin cutlets which are similar to boneless pork chops. Or you can ask for the region to be made into one or two rump roasts.

## Ground Meat / Sausage

There tends to always be some bits that are trimmed and get made into ground meat. The tips above maximize other cuts, which will minimize how much meat gets ground. If you want more ground meat, then choose which portions above you don't care about and have them ground.

Butchers often turn ground meat into loose sausage, which means it's not in links. The difference between sausage and ground meat is that sausage has spices added, plus it has been mixed to the point of changing its texture. It doesn't have the loose texture that you associate with ground beef; it wants to hold its shape during cooking like sausage patties. Most butchers have several flavors of sausage to choose from. If you prefer ground pork rather than sausage, just tell your butcher so.

## Miscellaneous

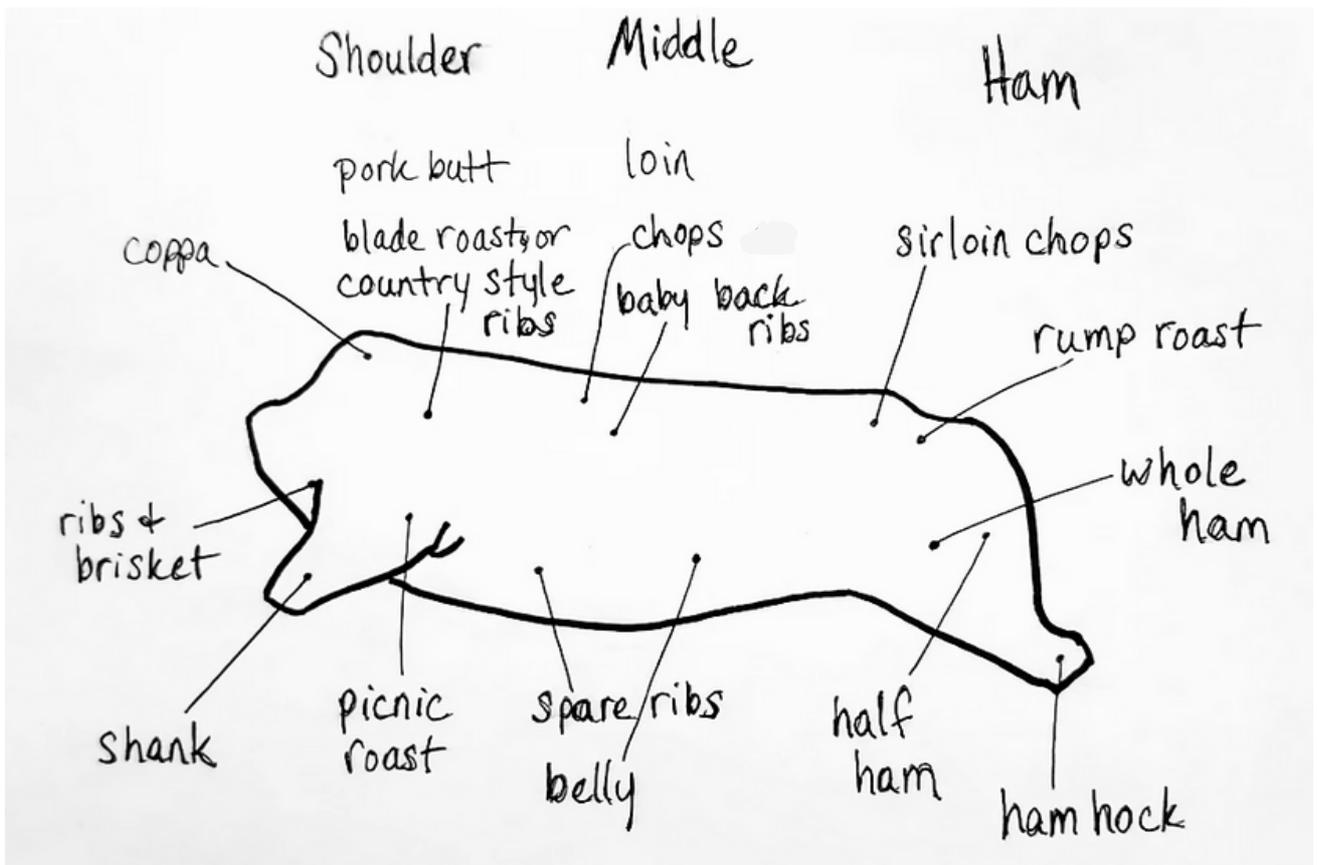
Butchers have a base price that they charge per pound. Having them cure and smoke, or make into sausage, costs extra. So if you want to save as much money as possible, consider taking it those last steps on your own.

If you want to have your cured meat be chemical free, ask your butcher to do nitrate/nitrite free cures. Be aware that nitrates are what give bacon and ham the pink color you expect even once the meat is cooked. If you do chemical free cures, the meat will turn gray when you cook it.

Butchers assume you don't want extra bones. If you want bones for soup or for feeding your dog, tell them to save ALL of the bones for you. And if you want organ meats, you will need to tell them before they slaughter the hog. By the time they are going through the cut sheet with you, it's too late!

Not all pigs have so much fat that there is much to save as fat back. However, there is usually a little more fat than most people want on their pork chops and ham, and butchers are in the habit of trimming extra fat and adding it to the grind pile. If you want it left on your meat, or if you want the fat saved out for rendering into lard, be sure to tell the butcher what you want done with your fat.

Most butchers in America remove the skin from the hog rather than scalding, scraping off the hair and leaving the skin on. Some older recipes or international recipes call for the "rind" --that's the skin. Personally, I almost never want the skin left on. If keeping the rind on is important to you, either find a butcher who is willing to do it, or butcher the pig yourself.





# PORK ROAST

---

The easiest way to make dinner for 3 nights

Roasts are wonderful because they are easy and elegant, and you can get three meals from one cut. Good cuts for roasts are the picnic shoulder, the Boston butt, loin, and rump.

---

# PORK ROAST

---



## Ingredients

1 pork roast, bone in, roughly 5 pounds (but any size will do)  
pork rub, or 1 tsp salt, 1 tsp pepper, and 1/2 tsp garlic powder  
parchment paper  
water

## Directions

- 1 Thaw the roast by placing it in the fridge (with a plate under it) three days before you intend to cook it.
- 2 The day of cooking, preheat your oven to 300F. Rub the meat on all sides with the rub. Place it fat side up in a roasting pan and add 8 oz of water to the bottom of the pan. Tent parchment paper over the meat and tuck its edges down under it.
- 3 Place it in the oven and cook for about 40 minutes per pound. Aim for an internal temperature of 180F. Keep an eye on the liquid in the bottom of the pan. Add water if necessary.
- 4 When it has reached 180F, take it out and let it rest for a half hour. This is an important step to let it reabsorb juices. If you don't let it rest, it won't be as juicy when you eat it.
- 5 This last step is not necessary, but it gives it a really nice finishing touch. After you have taken the roast out of the oven to rest, increase the oven to 475F. After the half hour rest, place it back in the oven for 15 minutes so that the outside gets really brown and the fat gets crunchy. Carve it and serve immediately.

Pour off the juices into a jar. The fat will solidify on the top as beautiful, creamy lard. The dark juice beneath the lard is natural bouillon and gives soup the most amazing umami flavor.

## Next 2 Days

The next day, carve off the remaining meat and chop it up. Add it to a stir fry, fried rice, or any other dish that can use savory pork bites.

The morning after that, make broth from the bone (see page 10) and turn that into easy, nourishing soup.

---

# APPLE BRINED ROAST OR PULLED PORK

---



Apples and pork are a match made in heaven. For a special occasion, dress up your roast by brining it in apple juice and then smoking it.

## Ingredients

1 pork roast, up to 12 lbs

4 cups apple juice

2 cups water

2 cups ice

1/2 cup maple syrup

1 tsp black pepper

1/4 cup salt

juice from 1 orange

## Directions

- 1 Make brine by heating all the ingredients except the meat, water and ice in a saucepan.
- 2 Add the water and ice to the hot brine to cool it and pour it into a large, deep food safe container. Pour the brine over the meat. Refrigerate overnight.
- 3 You may now cook it as in the previous recipe.

~Or~

You can hot smoke it and make pulled pork. Set your smoker to 225F and smoke for 3 hours. Use the brine to mop the surface every hour. Wrap the meat in aluminum foil (or the wrapping of your choice). Increase heat to 250F. Cook until the internal temperature of the meat is 205F, which should take from 6-8 hours. Rest the meat for at least 20 minutes. Pull the meat apart and add seasonings or bbq sauce, if desired.

# Bone Broth

---

An ancient, healing food.

---



# BONE BROTH

Supports joints, smooth skin, and healthy digestion. Perfect for sick kiddos (and adults).

---

The more meat, fat and connective tissue are left on the bones, the richer the broth will be. Also, the longer you simmer them, the more goodness you will extract from them.

It's important to only use pasture raised bones for broth. Bone broth made from a factory raised turkey once made me sick.

## Ingredients

---

Pasture raised pork bones,  
either left over from a  
roast, or raw

Apple cider vinegar

Sea salt

Water

Optional: veggies (including  
trimmings), garlic,  
bay leaf, peppercorns



If desired, you can pick the meat from the bones once it has cooled and add it back to the broth. The vegetables can also be chopped and added back in, for a simple and nutritious soup. Consider adding tomato paste, potatoes, pasta, or 1 cup of rice, split peas or lentils to the soup as well.



## Directions

- 1 If you are starting with raw bones, the broth will be more flavorful if you brown them in the oven at 350F for a half hour before boiling.
- 2 Place the bones in a large stock pot. Cover with water. Add a splash of vinegar (this will pull minerals from the bone) and salt to taste.
- 3 For an even more nutritious broth, add veggies. You can make good use of vegetable trimmings such as carrot tops and onion skins in it because they can be strained out of the broth along with the bones after cooking.
- 4 Simmer at least all day. If you have a slow cooker, you can allow it to simmer over night.
- 5 Remove the bones and veggies from the broth and pour through a sieve to clarify.

# Maple Ginger Glazed Pork Belly

---

Bacon isn't the only way to love pork belly!





# MAPLE GINGER GLAZED PORK BELLY

Sweet, sour, and gingery, this \*might\* be better than bacon.



## Directions

- 1** Place the pork belly and the water in a 5 quart pot and bring to a boil. Turn the heat down and simmer for 2 hours. (If you skip this step, the belly will be tough instead of tender).
- 2** While the meat is simmering, prepare the glaze by whirling the remaining ingredients in a blender till the ginger and garlic are minced fine.
- 3** Remove the meat from the water. Cut into bite sized pieces. Use the water to make rice.
- 4** Put the meat back in the pot and turn heat on medium low. Watch for splattering, consider using a splatter shield. When the meat begins turning golden, use a ladle to dip off as much rendered fat as possible. (Save this, it's lard!!) Then pour the glaze on it. Stir frequently. As it simmers and thickens, watch for it to get glossy and stick to the meat. Remove it from the heat before it burns.

Serve with rice and fermented veggies like kimchi, sauerkraut, or grated daikon radish.

## Ingredients

- 2 pounds of fresh pork belly
- 4 cups of water
- Thumb sized piece of ginger
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 2 tbs apple cider
- 1/4 tsp red pepper
- 1/4 cup maple syrup
- 1/4 cup soy sauce (or tamari, or coconut aminos for gluten and soy free)



# Cappicola

---

what every pig dreams of becoming...



---

# CAPPICOLA

---

Moist meat, fat that melts like butter in your mouth,  
this is better than jerky (and easier to make, too).



## Ingredients

1 coppa (neck loin)

for a 3.5 pound coppa:

3 tbs plus .5 tsp non-iodized salt

3/4 tsp sugar

1 tsp black pepper

3/4 tsp ground juniper berries

3/8 tsp nutmeg

1.5 tbs paprika

3/8 tsp red pepper

for a 5.5 pound coppa:

5 tbs non-iodized salt

1 tsp sugar

1.5 tsp black pepper

1 tsp ground juniper berries

1/2 tsp nutmeg

2 tbs paprika

1/2 tsp red pepper

## Directions

1

Different sized coppas require different amounts of salt to cure properly. Getting the salt right is important, the other ingredients can be adjusted to taste. Weigh your coppa and tweak the amount of salt up or down from these two examples as needed. There should be approximately 1 tbs of salt per pound of meat.

2

After weighing the meat and determining the correct amount of salt and other spices, mix the spices together and rub on all surfaces of the meat.

3

Place it in a plastic tub in the fridge. After a couple of days, some juices will have been drawn out of the meat. Pour off the juices and flip the meat. Do NOT add more salt. Leave the meat in the fridge for 5 weeks in a well ventilated spot (not in a drawer). Flip it occasionally.

4

After 5 weeks, take it out and use a serrated knife to cut thin slices off one end and EAT it. Try to cut them paper thin.

The meat is now shelf stable and can be left on the counter or hung by a sharp stainless steel hook. It tastes best at room temperature. Don't be alarmed if a little fuzz grows in the crevices of the meat. This is the same harmless mold that grows on cheese rinds.

This cured meat is eaten raw.



# Baked Beans and Ham

---

cured and smoked shanks make the best baked  
beans you've ever had

---

# BAKED BEANS AND HAM

---



## Ingredients

- 1 cured and smoked pork shank or ham hock
- 2 cups of dry beans\*, soaked over night
- Sliced onion
- 1/2 cup maple syrup
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp dry mustard
- 1/4 tsp dry ginger

\*soldier and navy beans are traditionally used in baked beans, but you can try other varieties if you like

## Directions

- 1 Put dry beans in a 5 quart pot the night before and cover with an inch of water.
- 2 The next morning, pour off the soak water and cover with fresh water. Bring to a boil and cook for an hour or two until soft.
- 3 Add the cured and smoked ham hock or shank and remaining ingredients. Cover and bake at 300F for 8 hours. Check the beans occasionally and add water as needed so they don't dry out.
- 4 An hour before serving, remove the shank or hock to cool. Once cool, pick the meat off the bone and pull it into bite sized pieces. Add it back to the beans and serve.

This goes great with fermented sauerkraut!

# Rendering Lard

---

Healthy, local fat for cooking and skin care



# HOW TO RENDER LARD

---

Lard is the liquid that melts (renders) out of pork as it cooks, such as bacon grease.

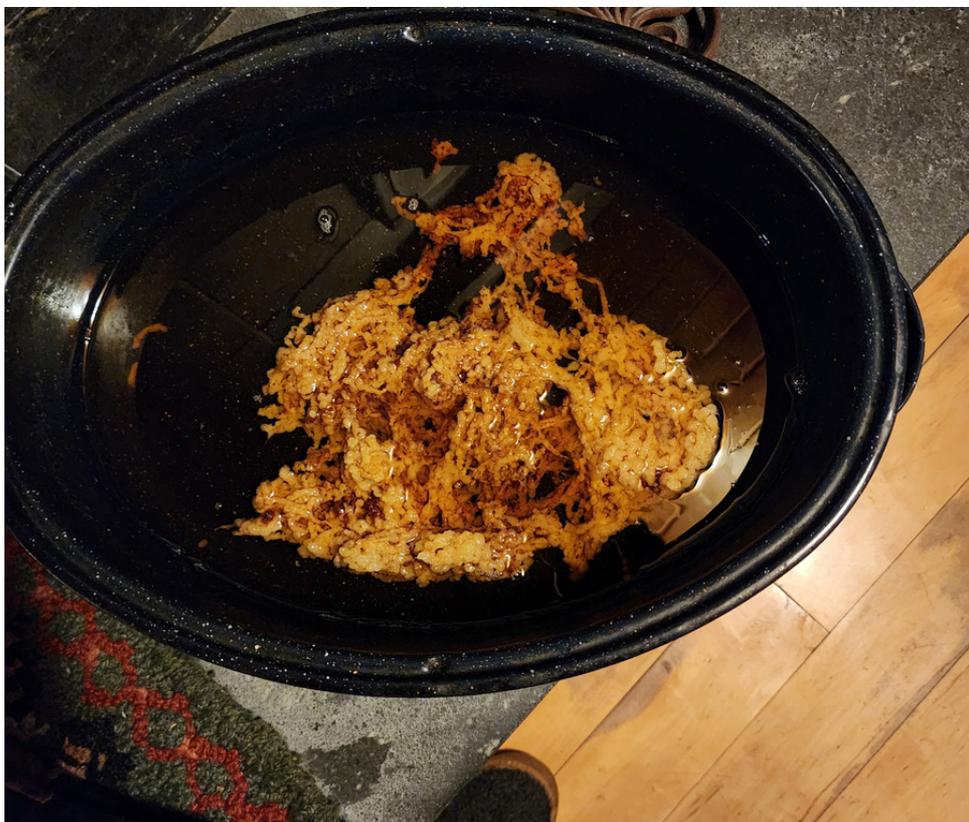
---

Lard is fantastic for cooking. When made from pasture raised pigs it is high in vitamin D and other fat soluble vitamins. You can also make lye soap and skin creams from it that rival anything made with exotic oils.

## Ingredients

Pork fat, ground or sliced

Tip: Save the crunchy cracklins that are left after rendering fat. Sprinkle them with salt and eat like popcorn, or add them to your favorite cornbread recipe.



## Directions

There are many ways to render fat. Some people add water. Some people do it on a stove top. I am sharing what has worked well for me. As long as you give the fat enough time to slowly cook, there are many ways to render the lard out of pork fat.

- 1 The smaller the pieces, the faster and easier it will render. Therefore, if you are able to grind the fat before rendering, definitely do--the lard just \*sighs\* out of ground fat. If you are not able to grind it, it is worth slicing into as small of pieces as you can. You want to maximize surface area.
- 2 Place ground or sliced fat into a baking dish large enough to hold it completely, like a roasting pan. Bake in a 200F oven for several hours. Keep an eye on it, when it appears that the crispy "cracklins" have given up all their lard, remove the dish from the oven.
- 3 Place a 3 inch sieve over a wide mouth pint or quart sized mason jar. Ladle the fat into the jar through the sieve. Place canning lids on while hot for maximum shelf life. It is fairly shelf stable, but storing it with sealed lids in the refrigerator will make it last at least 6 months.

Save the lard that renders out of bacon, roasts, and any other pork you cook as well! Usually roasts will also have juices that hide underneath the melted lard in the pan, so if you pour it into a cup you will end up with juices at the bottom and lard that solidifies on top. These juices are delicious and rich in collagen and should be used to enrich bone broth or any dish that would benefit from umami flavor.



---

# CONTACT US

---

Hilary Elmer

120 Birchwood Dr Lowell Vermont 05847

802-760-8510

[www.betweenthetreesfarm.com](http://www.betweenthetreesfarm.com)

[hilary@betweenthetreesfarm.com](mailto:hilary@betweenthetreesfarm.com)

Between the Trees Farm

---

[www.betweenthetreesfarm.com](http://www.betweenthetreesfarm.com)