



## RECIPE

# Nonna Donata's Cured Pork Butt Sausage

Family and food go together like peas and carrots—or for Melissa, like pork butt and Nonna Donata's special spice rub. Melissa and her family have kindly shared their ancestral recipe for curing meats at home. Like many family recipes, quantities aren't exact and are usually eyeballed. Use this as a guide and make modifications to suit your preferences.

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### EQUIPMENT:

1. 2 to 4 large plastic containers for the meat. If you can, avoid using metal trays because the metal will react poorly with the sodium nitrate and sodium nitrite in the curing salts. If metal trays are your best option though, cover the surfaces with parchment paper so the meat doesn't touch the metal.
2. A meat grinder and attachment to stuff the meat
3. Vinyl gloves for working with the meat
4. Food-safe needle
5. Strong butcher's twine

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## INGREDIENTS:

- **50 pounds fresh pork butt.**

*If your local butcher or grocery store doesn't sell that quantity, consider visiting a meat market or slaughterhouse.*

- **Salt.**

*Melissa's family uses premixed curing salts, specifically the Insta Cure #2 type, which is best for dry-curing sausage because of the specific amount of sodium nitrate and sodium nitrite.*

- **Curing salt:**

*Use 1 teaspoon of curing salt for every 5 pounds of meat (10 teaspoons for this recipe)*

- **Kosher salt:**

*Use 1/4 pound of salt per 10 pounds of meat (about 1 1/4 pounds of salt for this recipe)*

- **Seasonings.**

*Quantities vary depending on preferences. Donata uses a "by the handful" method for most of the following spices, adding a little at a time. It's best to have each seasoning in 3- to 4-ounce servings (a rough handful) accessible at your workstation.*

- **Red pepper flakes:**

*For a slightly hot sausage, start with about 1 handful and continue to add more as you work the flakes into the meat, until they're about 2 inches apart from each other throughout.*

- **Fennel seeds:**

*Start with about 1 handful and continue to add more as you work them into the meat, until the seeds are about 2 inches apart from each other throughout.*

- **Paprika:**

*A handful*

- **Coriander:**

*Up to half a handful*

- **Cayenne pepper:**

*2 tablespoons*

- **Casings (pig intestines), presalted and also purchased at the butcher.**

*"[Synthetic] casings are stronger, but we use natural casings for preference," Melissa says. Wash the casings thoroughly by running water through them and then soaking them with lemon and orange wedges. Ask a butcher for the proper size of casings you'll need for 50 pounds of pork butt sausage.*

**Gather your family or a group of friends to make this recipe a fun winter group activity.**



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## DIRECTIONS:

1. Trim the fat from the pork butt. Then cut the meat into strips thin enough to fit into the grinder. Set meat strips in one container.
2. Grind the meat one piece at a time and place the ground meat into another container.

3. Once all the meat is ground, gradually incorporate the curing salt, the kosher salt, and all of the seasonings, using either a mixer or gloved hands. Melissa's family has a tradition of all the members mixing the meat by hand together.

Note: The amount of each seasoning per 50 pounds of meat is mostly eyeballed and added by the handful. To check that the seasoning ratio is correct, fry up a small piece of meat to taste-test, and add seasonings accordingly. For this family recipe, the salts are added at the same time as the seasonings and mixed thoroughly together.

4. Using the meat stuffing attachment on the grinder, tightly fill each casing with meat. But be careful not to overstuff or the casings could burst. Then, using butcher's twine, tie up each end of the links to keep the sausage together. Just twisting the casing's ends might cause them to break, and the casing alone may not be strong enough to hold the hanging links.
5. With the needle, poke small holes all around each sausage so that the moisture can escape.
6. To store the sausages, hang the links from strong hooks or nails in a dry, cool space. Temperatures should remain between 39 and 49 degrees Fahrenheit, cool enough to keep the meat from spoiling, but not too cold that the meat can freeze.
7. The sausage will be done curing in approximately four to five weeks, depending on the temperature and conditions. You'll know it's done when the sausage is hardened and feels solid throughout. If unsure, wait another week and test again.

Visit the [National Center for Home Food Preservation](#) online to learn more about safety guidelines for curing meats at home.

#### **About the Writer**

Jennon Bell Hoffmann writes lifestyle and human-interest stories from her home in Illinois.