



Making Meat Jerky

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Beef jerky makes a great snack, or light weight meal alternative when your out on the trail. A pound of meat weighs 4 ounces after dehydration. Jerky can be stored at room temperature, so it saves a great amount of space in your freezer. The nutritional value of meat is virtually unchanged by dehydration, unlike dehydrated fruits and vegetables that lose up to 40% of their Vitamin C content. Dehydrated meat has as much protein after drying as it does before.

Making Jerky Safely

Food safety is a major concern when it comes to dehydrating meat, since it is a highly perishable food that can harbor harmful bacteria including E. coli and Salmonella. The usual food safety rules should be followed, such as having clean hands and work area, and preventing cross contamination. However, since jerky is made by dehydrating meat at 140-150 degrees for many hours, the risk of harmful bacteria remaining on the meat after drying is significant. USDA funded research is the basis for the bulletin, *Making Jerky at Home Safely*, by the Pacific Northwest Extension.

Three methods of making jerky safely are detailed in this booklet, including:

Precooking the meat to 160 degrees for beef or venison, 165 degrees for poultry

Post-drying heating jerky at 275 degrees for 10 minutes

Vinegar soak – acidifying the meat to prevent bacterial growth

These methods, plus testing jerky for doneness are detailed in the PNW publication, *Making Jerky at Home Safely* which can be found on our Food Preservation web page at: <http://ccesaratoga.org/resources/making-jerky>.

Storing Jerky

Jerky can be stored at room temperature, but the quality will deteriorate after just two weeks. The USDA recommends storing jerky in the refrigerator for 3-6 months, or the freezer for up to one year to maintain best flavor and quality.