

Gobble Up Some Turkey Jerky!

Posted by Sue



NOTE: I've developed some new variations on the turkey jerky theme, in this post. Check it out!

Ground turkey jerky has become my favorite munching snack. It's high in protein, lightweight, and so, so tasty! It's so good, I eat it on the trail *and* at home. I think jerky is fun food... a good jerky has enough spice that it bites back a bit. It makes you want to go, "ARGHHH!" and make pirate faces. Go on, you know you want to try it... nobody's watching.

This jerky is really easy to make, especially with a jerky gun – the entire process from starting the mix to having it laid out on the dryer sheets only takes 15 minutes. I'm all about slow food, but getting such a great snack with so little effort wins high marks in my book!



I have this jerky gun; it holds one pound of jerky mix. I love it!

If you feel DIY and want to make it without a jerky gun, have at it – I included instructions below – but if you think you’ll make ground meat jerky repeatedly, I **highly** recommend spending the \$20 and using the saved time and effort for other activities! Here’s a link to the one I have – it comes with three different nozzles, has a sturdy lever (which is important in jerky guns) and it comes apart easily for washing.



left: rope nozzle / right: narrow strip nozzle



wide strip nozzle

Below is my current favorite recipe; it has a bit of spice, not too much “ARGHH!” factor, and a touch of lemon. Make sure you follow these instructions all the way through; there is an important food safety step at the end. In fact, I recommend reading my entire Jerky 101 page, for important info on meat drying process and safety.

This recipe is for one pound of meat, which will fill the above jerky gun one time, and the mix fills roughly one Excalibur dehydrator tray. From one pound of turkey, I get about 10 sticks using the round jerky rope fitting or the narrow strip fitting, and I get about 6 sticks with the wide strip

fitting. My favorite is the jerky rope; since turkey has less fat than beef, it tends to produce drier jerky, and the rope type seems to hold onto a bit more chewiness. I recommend starting with the one-pound recipe before doubling or tripling it for bulk production; that way you can get a sense of whether you want to add other flavors. Sometimes I add herbs from my garden.

Make sure your hands are always clean during this process; introducing pathogens to the meat during any point in the preparation or drying process increases the likelihood of bacterial growth or spoilage down the line. I tend to wash my hands a number of times during the process, since I repeatedly go back and forth from handling the raw meat to handling cooking utensils. Once you are handling dry jerky, make sure your hands are completely dry. So go ahead, get your OCD on for a few minutes!

AIP NOTE: This recipe has black pepper in it, which is not strict AIP. I have tested fine for it, and include it in my diet occasionally. If you have not yet tested for it, just leave it out, the jerky tastes fine without it.

Ground Turkey Jerky

Ingredients

1 lb ground turkey, mixed dark and white meat
1 Tbs coconut aminos
1 Tbs maple syrup (you can sub honey, or even leave out the sweetener for a more sassy flavor)
juice and zest of one lemon
1 Tbs onion powder
1 tsp garlic granules
1 tsp sea salt
1 tsp black pepper (NOT AIP)

Instructions

Preparation:



All mixed up!

Put all ingredients except the turkey in a large bowl. Mix well. Add the ground turkey. With your bare hands, mix it all thoroughly. Wash your hands (see note above about hand washing).

Jerky Gun Method:

With a bare hand or using a large spoon, load the jerky gun all the way. I use a butter knife to 'burp' the meat and work the air pockets out, so when I'm squeezing the mix out onto the trays, it doesn't have air spots which cause gaps in the jerky strips.

Put the tip of choice on, and slowly push out any air in the end. Slowly press the lever to see how fast it comes out. Lay down strips of jerky mix on your dehydrator sheets, leaving a bit of space between them. There needs to be air circulation for ideal drying.



Using the wide flat strip fitting



Using the jerky rope fitting

By-Hand Method:

Prepare two large sheets of parchment paper, roughly the size of a dehydrator tray. Split the mix in half. One half at a time, press the meat mix between the layers into a square or rectangle, till it's about ¼ inch thick. Peel off the top layer of paper. With a large knife, score the mix into strips about 1.5 inches wide. Now the fun part: transfer the strips to dehydrator trays either with your hands or a spatula. TIP: If you wet your hands or the spatula with water before each lift, they won't stick to the turkey so much (... or, buy a jerky gun...).

Drying:

Place the loaded trays in the dehydrator and set to 155°F. Dry for 4-6 hours, till the strips are dry but not brittle; they will dry further in the next step, and you don't want blackened jerky. Trust me on this one... I've made my share of overdone jerky! From time to time, check the jerky for any oils rising to the surface. If you notice a lot (which is unlikely with turkey) pat it off with a non-toxic paper towel. Excess oils make jerky more prone to rancidity later on. In my experience with turkey, I've only seen oils coming off after the last step in the process (below).



Dried wide, flat strips



Dried jerky ropes

IMPORTANT: Post-drying Heating to Assure Meat Safety:

Jerky meats need to reach a temperature of 275°F for ten solid minutes to kill any pathogens present. With ground meats, post-drying heating is the easiest method of assuring food safety, and it produces the most traditional jerky. Since dehydrator temperatures fluctuate during drying time, it's important to give the jerky a final high-temp moment to achieve this.

Just before your turkey is ready to take out of the dehydrator, preheat your oven to 275°F.

IMPORTANT: the oven must be to temperature before you put the meat in. After the meat has been dehydrated, use tongs to immediately place the dried strips onto a baking sheet, with no overlapping. Heat in the preheated oven at 275°F for 10 minutes. Remove the jerky immediately (or have blackened jerky) and cool to room temperature before packing for storage. Tip: I take mine off the baking sheet right away and cool it on a plate, to discourage further darkening of the jerky.

Storage:



Chow down!

Once completely cooled, package the jerky up in an airtight, preferably light-proof container, and store in a cool dark place, or even in the fridge or freezer for longer shelf life. It's very important to make sure your jerky is fully dried and fully cooled before packaging. See my Jerky 101 page for more details on meat drying techniques, storage and safety.

I hope you enjoy your turkey jerky as much as I enjoy mine! I'd love to hear how you like it, and if you experiment with any flavor additions!

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