

According to DR. CHASE'S RECIPES OR INFORMATION FOR EVERYBODY, the thirty-sixth edition of which came out in 1866, here are some recipes for preservation of meat without refrigeration. One of the recipes for preserving beef deals with hundred-pound lots, which would not be unusual on a farm or ranch. First you would thoroughly cover the beef in salt 'to draw out the blood.' After the beef remained in the salt for twenty-four hours you'd drain it and pack it into a wooden barrel. Then you'd prepare the preserving brine. This would consist of seven pounds of salt, one ounce each of saltpeter (potassium nitrate, also used in making gunpowder) and cayenne pepper, one quart of molasses, and eight gallons of 'soft water.' That was usually rainwater caught in barrels and allowed to settle until all the dust went to the bottom of the barrel. This you'd bring to a boil and 'skim well.' You'd then let it cool, pour it over the beef, and put a lid on the barrel.

Now, obviously, this stuff is gonna be mighty salty when you take it out of the barrel. What you'd do to get rid of the salt would be parboil the stuff-throw it in a pot of water and boil it for fifteen or twenty minutes. After that you could cook it in whatever way you wanted to. Unfortunately, parboiling has an unfortunate effect on the meat. It makes it about as tough as boot leather. After the meat was parboiled but before it was cooked a good cook took a heavy metal skillet and pounded the meat with the edge of it to tenderize the stuff.

By the end of summer, the onset of autumn, this preserved beef would be getting a mite 'high,' to say the least. The primary reason rich brown gravies and tangy sauces were invented was not to 'enhance the flavor of the meat,' but rather to disguise the fact that it was pretty far on the way to being rotten.

To preserve mutton-the hams only-you were advised to put the mutton hams into a weak brine for two days. Exactly how much salt made a 'weak brine' isn't mentioned. After that, for each one hundred pounds of mutton hams put six pounds of salt, an ounce of saltpeter, two ounces of saleratus, and a pint of molasses into six gallons of water and pour it over the mutton in the barrel. You would leave the mutton in the brine for two to three weeks and then take it out, dry it, and apparently dry it as you would jerky. According to a note, the saleratus kept the meat from getting hard.

There were several methods of curing hams, all of which involved smoking them. Mr. Thomas J. Sample of Muncie, Indiana, writing in 1859, prepared his hams this way. To what Mr. Sample called a 'cask of hams'-he apparently used large casks, for this recipe is for twenty-five to thirty hams-he allowed them to lie in salt for two or three days. He then packed them in casks and poured his brine over them. The water-he doesn't give a quantity-had to have enough salt added to float a 'sound egg or a potato.' That's a lot of salt. To that he added a half-pound of saltpeter and a gallon of molasses. He then left the hams in this brine for six weeks. After that time he took them out, drained them, dried them, and smoked

them. Dr. Chase adds that immediately dusting them, upon removing them from the smoke, with finely-ground pepper will keep flies off.