

# How to Smoke Ribs

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★★★★☆ 74 Recipe Ratings

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Ribs. Just like baseball and the 4th of July, smoked ribs are an American institution. Nothing beats a backyard barbecuing session with smoked ribs amongst friends and family. Thankfully, smoking ribs is an easy task, even if you don't have an expensive smoker. With a beautifully-smoked rack of ribs, you'll have your guests begging for seconds and your secret recipe.

Part  
1

## Part 1 of 3: Trimming the Ribs and Making the Rub



**1 Select your cut of meat.** Food safety is important when cooking raw meat, so find a fresh pink rack of ribs at your local grocery store. Many people choose to smoke with St. Louis style (spare) ribs, which come from near the belly on the pig.<sup>[1]</sup> They are substantial and tasty — very easy to cook. If you like, you can also select baby-back ribs, which come from the backside, near the loin.

- Since baby back ribs are a little less substantial, they're harder to [smoke](#) while still keeping them juicy and tender. Adjust this recipe if you do decide to use baby back ribs; the cooking time will lower significantly.
- While you can [smoked prime rib](#) or [standing rib roast](#), that cut contains more meat than spare and baby back ribs do, so you'll need to follow slightly different instructions to cook it properly.



**2 Remove the thick, sinewy membrane on the back of the ribs.** With a fingernail or a knife, work your way under the light membrane on the back of the ribs. Grab ahold of the loosened membrane with a paper towel and pry it from the ribs. Much of it should come off in one fell swoop. Discard.



**3 Spot-check the ribs for any substantial bits of fat and remove.** With a sharp knife, remove any excess fat that's still clinging to your ribs. Although a little fat is fine and will probably render off during the cooking process, eating a chewy hunk of fat when you're expecting a tender morsel of meat is not the most pleasant experience. A little bit of extra preparation during this step will make the eating experience a lot nicer in the end.



**4 Make your rub.** A dry rub is a spice mix that coats the rack of ribs and provides a complimentary flavor to the meat's natural taste. Dry rubs can be made any number of ways (dehydration, spice-mixing, etc.) and using any number of recipes.<sup>[2]</sup> Explore different recipes and variations to suit your tastes, or use this very basic dry rub<sup>[3]</sup> as a springboard for your invention:

- ¼ c (59 mL) brown sugar
- ¼ c (59 mL) cup paprika
- 3 US tbsp (44 mL) black pepper
- 3 US tbsp (44 mL) coarse salt
- 2 tsp (9.9 mL) garlic powder
- 2 tsp (9.9 mL) onion powder
- 2 tsp (9.9 mL) celery seeds
- 1 tsp (4.9 mL) cayenne pepper



**5** **Apply your rub generously over the entire rack of ribs, coating it evenly.** Don't be stingy with your dry rub. Even if you're planning on smothering your ribs with a wet sauce later on in the cooking process, it helps to have the ribs nice and coated early on in the process, when the bulk of the cooking happens. Use 1–2 tablespoons (15–30 mL) of dry rub at least per pound of meat.





**6 Let your ribs come to room temperature while you set up.** After applying the rub, let the meat start to soak up some of the delicious spices you've acquainted with. (Meat, meet spice; spice, meet meat.) This does two things in particular:

- It allows the dry rub to start penetrating the meat, permeating it with flavor.
- It allows for a juicier rack of ribs. When salt hits meat, it brings moisture out to the surface. If you apply your rub and cook right away, the moisture brought out to the surface will leave your precious pork. If you apply your rub and let the meat rest, however, the moisture journeys back into the meat through a process called osmosis.<sup>[4]</sup> This process produces consistently juicier meat.



**1 Start your smoker.** If you have a smoker, heat it to about 225 °F (107 °C) along the cooking surface, and validate it with a standard cooking thermometer. It may be hotter in the core of the fire, but ensure that the surface is set as close to 225 °F (107 °C) as possible.

- To get your fire going, you may use charcoal and any sort of a variety of wood. Some people prefer different types of wood for different types of flavor, so find what works for you.



**2 If you don't have a smoker, improvise.** Use a gas grill set on 225 °F (107 °C) as your improvised smoker. First, set a pan of water 3/4 full underneath the grate on which you'll be cooking your ribs. This helps with cooking and helps keep the temperature down.<sup>[5]</sup> Next, make a smoker pouch by wrapping wood chips in aluminum foil and then puncturing the foil several times with a knife to let the smoke escape. Place this at the bottom of the grill but not directly underneath the ribs.

- Remember to soak your wood chips for at least 30 minutes before creating your smoker pouch. Wet chips will release their signature smoke better and longer than dried-out chips.
- Choose from any number of wood chips for smoking. Choose from among applewood, cedar, hickory, maple, mesquite, oak, pecan, and many more.<sup>[6]</sup>

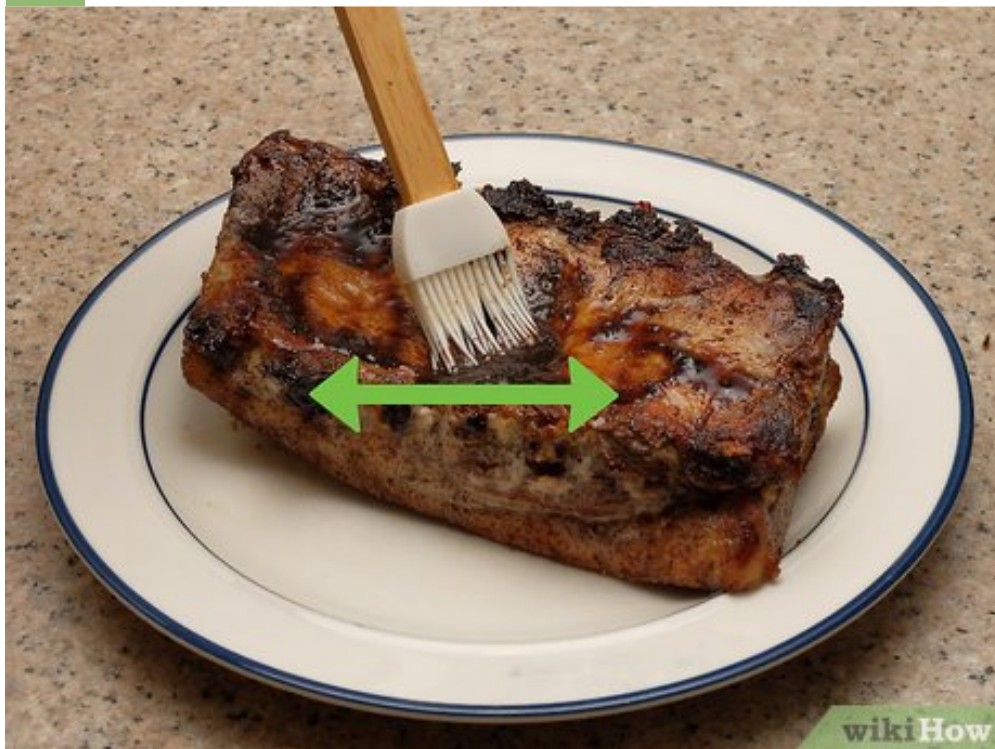




**3 Smoke your ribs at 225° F for 3 hours.** It normally takes about 6 hours to fully smoke a rack of ribs, so if you want to just smoke them, leave them in there for about 6 hours, giving them a liquid spray (apple juice, beer, even water) about every hour. Otherwise, this is only the first step in the process. During these first 3 hours, what you're trying to do is imbue your meat with some smoky flavor and get the cooking process started.

Part  
3

### Part 3 of 3: Finishing the Process



**1 Remove the ribs from your smoker or grill and baste generously with barbecue sauce.** You can use any store-bought barbecue sauce you'd like, or you can decide to [make your own](#). Whatever you decide, slather the barbecue sauce onto the meat-side of your ribs generously.





**2** **Wrap your rack in aluminum foil and add some liquid.** Many people choose to add beer to their ribs — flavorful beer, not light or watery beer — but if you don't want to use beer, you can also add a bit of apple juice instead.

- Seal up the ribs and the accompanying liquid as airtight as possible while still leaving room for the meat to breathe. Ideally, you don't want moisture leaking out of your aluminum foil enclosure, so make sure it's wrapped securely.



**3** **Cook your ribs at 225° F for approximately 2 hours.** This part of the cooking process begins to break down the collagen present in the ribs, leaving you with ribs that are fall-off-the-bone delicious.



**4** Remove the aluminum foil, baste the ribs (if necessary) with barbecue sauce, and cook uncovered for 30 minutes to an hour. Check on the ribs after 30 minutes, though they may need longer. (Remember though, you can always cook the meat longer, but you can't take doneness away.) This final stint in the oven will firm your ribs up and should leave them ready to be devoured.



**5** **Enjoy.** Enjoy your ribs next to some corn on the cob and coleslaw for a hearty dish that screams summer.



**Community Q&A**

#### Question

**How long do I cook the ribs before wrapping them in foil?**



Community Answer

You cook ribs for 2 hours before you wrap them in tin foil.

Helpful 39 Not Helpful 96

#### Question

**Can the leftover ribs be frozen?**



Community Answer

No, they will not be edible any longer if they are frozen.

Helpful 29 Not Helpful 172

#### Question

**To what temperature do you smoke ribs?**



**WikiaWang**  
Top Answerer

Smoke ribs at 225°F (107°C) as mentioned above in section 2. This is usually the best temperature for smoking ribs.

Helpful 6 Not Helpful 6



#### Tips

- Try to avoid keeping the smoker door open too long. This and any sort of wind, while you are cooking, may cool the smoker off or even exterminate your fire.

#### References

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4. ↑ <http://www.steamykitchen.com/163-how-to-turn-cheap-choice-steaks-into-gucci-prime-steaks.html>
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