

IN THE NEWS

Nutritional Content Down

A University of Texas bio-chemist has found that the nutritional content of vegetables and fruits has declined over the past 50 years. Declines have ranged from 6% for protein, 15% for iron, 20% for vitamin C and 38% for riboflavin. It is suspected that the trends to growing crops faster and bigger may be a reason for the decline, as these crops do not have the traditional growing cycle that allows the plants to acquire the nutrients by synthesis or from the soil. *Food Processing, April 2006*

Upcoming Events

“Toronto’s Best Party” The Gourmet Food & Wine Show, Toronto, November 23 – 26 at the Metro Convention Centre, in the South Building.

For more information, visit www.foodandwineshow.ca.

Did You Know?

Some epicures look for ham made from the left leg of a pig, as it is more tender than ham made from the right leg. Why, you ask? The theory goes that a pig scratches himself with his right leg, using those muscles more often, resulting in tougher meat. *(Of course, the true ham fanatic would have to observe the pig before slaughter to be sure it isn't left footed!)*



The Meat of It: *Ham*

For many families, it just wouldn't be Christmas without a festive ham dinner. For meat processors, there are many varieties of hams that can be made to tempt your customers during the holiday season...

Ham may be fresh, aged, cured, or cured and smoked. By strict definition, a ham must be made from the hind leg of pork. The meat sizes can vary from whole muscles to small chunk-sized pieces that are restructured. Our CFIA (Canadian Food Inspection Agency) regulations state that a “HAM” product (whole muscle) must have 80% of the muscle pieces with weights greater than 25grams, and the protein level must exceed 16%.

The Common Ham

The most common types of ham sold in the grocery stores are cooked, brine-cured and boneless, where the brine is injected into the fresh meat before cooking. The brine will include salt and sodium nitrite with optional added ingredients including sugars, seasonings, phosphates and sodium ascorbate or erythorbate. An additional smoking step may also be included, to give added smoke flavour and colour to the ham.

Dry Cure

A dry-cured ham is rubbed with a mixture containing salt, nitrates/nitrites, and sometimes sugar. This is followed by an extended period of drying and aging under controlled temperature and humidity conditions. Suggested guidelines for this process include aging the ham for at least 45 days at temperatures between 75 – 95°F and at humidity levels of 55-65% . The dry curing draws out the moisture, and will reduce the ham weight by 18 – 25%.

Specialty Premium Hams

There are many specialty hams produced, and they are often linked to their geographical area of origin, and usually dry-cured.

Germany's **Westphalian ham** is traditionally cold smoked over beachwood chips, with juniper berries rubbed on the ham with the cure, or added to the wood chips during the long smoking process. Both beachwood and juniper berries are plentiful in the Westphalian region and are therefore often incorporated into local meat products.

Ensuring Good Quality HAM PRODUCTS



Some Key Guidelines

- 1.** Boning rooms, pickle cellars, stuffing areas and holding areas all must be refrigerated. High micro counts, low nitrite and erythorbate levels are all indicative of processing temperatures that are too high, or hams that are in process too long.
- 2.** An over-pumped product will be salty, and an under-pumped product will be flat in flavour and will have a poor colour due to insufficient nitrite and erythorbate.
- 3.** Injection equipment if not well maintained with clean and sharp needles may give a lower injected level than desired. It is essential to check-weigh pieces of ham before and after pumping to ensure the proper pick-up.
- 4.** If hams fall apart during slicing, the reasons can include off-condition of fresh meat, low salt levels, temperature abuse before cooking, tumbling temperatures that are too high or too low, incorrect tumbling cycle, or excessive free brine in the tumbler.
- 5.** Quality ham production requires good quality

meat, the correct curing formula, proper temperatures throughout the cycle, an adequate final cooking temperature of 70-72°C, correct boning procedures, tight stuffing in the netting and cold temperatures in storage and distribution.

Need help with your brine formulas, tumble schedules, or cook/smoke programs?

Contact Chris, our technical specialist, for recommended processing details at 1-888-456-6252, or via email at lab@malabarsuperspice.com.

Because You Asked...

Q: "When slicing meats such as roast beef, corned beef, and black forest ham, there is sometimes a bright, rainbow coloured sheen that appears on the meat – what is this, and is the meat safe to eat?"

A: The iridescent, or rainbow appearance is not the result of mold, nor is it caused by a processing error. It is in fact a harmless optical effect caused by the slicing process.

Meat, or animal muscle, is made up of tiny protein strands called myofilaments, which are bound together to form the fibers that make up the whole muscle. When a very sharp knife or slicing machine cuts the filaments crosswise at a certain angle, the light waves are refracted (bent) into two different directions, and the eyes then will see the rainbow colours of the refracted waves. Usually the dominant colour will be green, because the human eye is most sensitive to that colour. It is harmless, and does not affect the quality or safety of your meat products.

Continued from page one... **The Meat of it: Ham**

Italy is famous for its **Parma ham**, or 'Prosciutto'. Members of the Parma Consortium, the self-policing cooperative that maintains product integrity, are the only processors who can make and sell certified Parma hams. True Parma ham is aged for 400 days!

In the United States, one of the most sought-after domestic hams is the **Smithfield ham**, which is made in the area of Smithfield, Virginia. To produce Smithfield hams, the local pigs are allowed to feed in the peanut fields in the fall, and their unique diet adds a wonderful flavour to the final product.



A Christmas Touch

During the holiday season, many ham processors dress up the ham in honour of the season. Some suggestions for adding that Christmas touch to hams include pricking the ham with whole cloves, adding pineapple slices, and using a flavourful glaze. These touches make the holiday meal particularly special for your customers.

The Origin of the Christmas Ham

The Christmas Ham is an ancient traditional ingredient in the Swedish Christmas celebration (**Yule**) and is still today as important as the Christmas tree. Before the arrival of Christianity to Scandinavia, a pig was sacrificed to the god Freyr at the Yule celebrations and eaten. This tradition of butchering a pig at Christmas continued after Christianization, and several pork dishes remain central to the Christmas dinner, including sausages, bread dipped in pork fat, and of course, the Christmas Ham.

Making Traditional Swedish Ham

The traditional Swedish ham includes a mustard coating, and is prepared as follows:

1. Begin with a cooked ham, and blend together 3 tbsp hot, sweet grainy mustard (whole seed sweet mustard) and one egg, until it has a silky texture.
2. Brush over the ham.
3. Sprinkle a heavy coating of breadcrumbs over the ham and press into the mustard coating.
4. Brown in a 400°F oven for 15 minutes, or until brown.

"How Much Ham Will I Need?" Recommended Serving Sizes

When serving your customers, the suggested serving sizes to consider when selecting a ham, are as follows: 1/2 - 1/3 lb of meat per serving of boneless ham and 3/4 - 1 lb of meat per serving of ham with large bone in.

Equipment Review

from **Modern Butcher Supply:**
Smokehouse Netting

Introducing **smokehouse netting** to replace costly metal screens, when smoking and drying meats, poultry, and seafood!



This specialty rigid netting is manufactured from FDA and USDA accepted resins, and is designed to prevent sticking and the smooth surface is easier to clean. The 1/2" (6 mm) mesh size allows for air circulation and promotes even and thorough processing.



This netting is great for jerky, and is also well suited for delicate seafood products.

The smokehouse netting is available in cut pieces in widths of 48", and also rolls of 50 ft.



To request a sample, or for more information, contact Doug toll free at 1-866-634-7151, or via email at doug@modernbutchersupply.com.



Modern Butcher Supply is a wholly owned subsidiary of Malabar Super Spice Co. Ltd.

WHAT IS PSE PORK?

"Pale, soft and exudative" pork is a very light coloured, soft and mushy meat that is not recommended for quality cured pork products. PSE pork can be related to some key variables such as the breed of hog, the lack of backfat on the hog, and high heat stress due to the time of year – all of which contribute to the stress resistance of the hog. Lower stress resistance increases the incidence of PSE pork.

In processing, the pale and soft pork has a higher moisture loss, which then results in poor cured colour development, and a pale meat colour that is usually grey after being cured. There is also a greater weight loss during curing, more muscle separation and uneven cure penetration. The poor water binding-ability results in a dry meat product. The PSE condition can be somewhat minimized by proper temperature control from slaughter to curing.

BLEND of the Season



It's nearly Christmas! While presents and decorations are all part of the fun, everyone knows that it's the FOOD that makes this the most wonderful time of the year.

With that in mind, it's time to dress up your Hams in their Christmas best, with Glazes from Malabar...

Malabar's selection of Christmas Ham Glazes:

Honey Ham Glaze	MALHHG-038
Lemon Herb Glaze	MALLHG-004
Orange & Ginger Glaze	MALOGG-026
Rum Ham Glaze	MALRHG-001
Red Cherry Ham Glaze	MALCHG-028
Tomato Glaze	MALMTG-006
Mustard Glaze	MALMDG-031

New for this season, we have developed 'Seasoning Only' blends especially for Stuffing - just add your own breading!

Apple Cinnamon Stuffing Seasoning	MALSAC-020
Pesto Stuffing Seasoning	MALSPE-021
Poultry Stuffing Seasoning	MALSP0-022
Garden Herb Stuffing Seasoning	MALSCH-023
Garlic & Butter Stuffing Seasoning	MALSCB-024
Festive Cranberry Stuffing Seasoning	MALSCB-025
Butter Pecan Stuffing Seasoning	MALSBP-026

To ORDER A SAMPLE, of any of the above, or if you've got a new flavour you'd like to try, contact Chris at **1-888-456-6252**, or email lab@malabarspices.com.



OUR PRESIDENT'S Choice



On behalf of all of us here in the Malabar family, I wish you and yours the very best of the holiday season.

Our family Christmas dinner has always included a cured, smoked turkey. It's a luxurious treat, and the mellow smoked flavour and moist texture makes for a delicious change from the ordinary. The refrigerated leftovers make a great late night snack too! *(I have many childhood memories of sneaking away with a smoked turkey leg so that I wouldn't have to share it!)*

Many of our customers include smoked turkeys in their holiday production, and if you haven't tried it, you will find smoked turkey pieces in many deli counters, to provide you with a smaller portion to try. A smoked turkey provides a delicious flavour coupled with an appetizing, nut brown smoked colour that makes this meat highly desirable as a festive treat or a special meal any time of year. Try something new this holiday season!

All the best!

Doris Valade
President
Malabar Super Spice Co. Ltd.

Stuffing the Holiday Bird?

Malabar has a variety of pre-seasoned bread stuffing in bulk bags, ready to use for your stuffed pork and Christmas turkey. We encourage you to try one of the following, and add a little 'spice' to your holiday!

Traditional Poultry Stuffing	(15 kg bag)
Apple/Cinnamon Stuffing	(15 kg bag)
Herb Garden Stuffing	(15 kg bag)
Wild Rice and Mushroom Stuffing	(5 kg bag)
Butter, Garlic, Herb Stuffing	(12 kg bag)

All the best of the Season, from Malabar.



For more information on any of the subjects covered in Malabar's newsletter, or to suggest topics you'd like to see covered in future editions, please contact Sara Alexander at marketing@malabarspices.com.

Look for our next edition in January 2007.

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