



AUGUST 21, 2012  
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By **Erik R. Trinidad** | August 21, 2012

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Going to a “sausage party” may not make for an ideal night out on the town, especially if you’re on the prowl for a female romantic interest. However, you can definitely make a sausage party interesting—make it coed, even—if the party is all about *making* sausages. Making homemade sausage can be just as much fun (or even more so) as going to a party. And besides, you’ll no longer have to rely on your grocery or meat market to get the links you want. You can make your own sausage to suit your own palate, as long as you have the right ingredients, some kitchen tools, and a little instruction.

### Get your meat, but don’t cut the fat

According to butcher and sausage specialist Ben Turley of **The Meat Hook** in Brooklyn, NY, the ideal type and cut of meat for sausage is pork butt. “When you look at it, you see a lot of different muscles, many of them laced with a fatty ring around them,” Turley says. “This adds to the smooth texture you get with sausage, and it also yields a near-perfect ratio of lean meat to soft

fats.”

Pork fat is the best type of fat to use in a sausage, regardless of what other type of meat you’re using. “If you’re making a chicken sausage, put pork fat in it,” Turley advises. “Fat is EXTREMELY important...because it’s a significant reason why you’re able to taste all the ingredients in the fashion that you do. Without fats, sausages are dry, and ingredients become very difficult to taste in any way that can be called ‘good.’”



### Get your grind on

When you’ve got your fatty meat, get to the grinder (or have a butcher get to one). Grinders extrude meat through plates with holes of varied sizes. “When you look at grinds, first look at the amount of liquid you plan on using [in the rest of your recipe]. If you’re using more than a cup for every five pounds of meat, then use a more fine grind,” Turley advises. Otherwise, use the medium-sized grind—not too small, not too large—in order to get the ideal surface area to bind with salt.

### Add in the other flavors and knead it

Put your ground meat into a mixing bowl and add other ingredients that will make your

sausage special. There are many herb and spice combinations you can experiment with. When I made sausage with Turley, we used ingredients that included cayenne, paprika, red wine, garlic, fresh rosemary, and, above all, *salt*, the component that really pulls out the flavors of the meat and certain spices.

Once everything is combined in a bowl, mix it more with your hands. Really knead it as if you’re kneading dough, so that all the ingredients are evenly distributed throughout the meat and there aren’t any air pockets. Then, to make sure everything is ideal, take some of the mixture, make a small patty, enclose it in tin foil, and grill it on a skillet over low-medium heat. If the taste and texture of this sausage test run are okay with you, you’ll know that the rest of the batch is ready to stuff into casings.



### Trust your guts

“For casings, you never really use anything other than sheep casings—for smaller sausages, like hot dogs—and hog casings, for what you might call a more standard-sized sausage,” Turley explains. By casings, he’s referring to the intestines of an animal, which is actually strong and stretchy enough to hold your meaty mixture together, despite the fact that it looks all shriveled when you get it from a butcher. “I recommend staying away from faux casings; they tend to break more easily,” Turley says.



The sausage casings should be presoaked in cold water before you run more water through the shaft, spooling it onto your hand in the process. “Don’t smell your hands,” Turley advises after this step. Slide the entire length of each casing onto the tubular end of a sausage stuffer, tie the tip closed, and then place your seasoned meat mixture inside the container. Then extrude the meat into the casings in a steady manner, so that no bulges or air pockets develop inside. Fill the entire casing until you run out of room or filling (whichever comes first), and then tie the end.

To make the links, simply twist sections of it at a time. Turn one way for one link, then the other way for the next, and alternate directions. In the end, you’ll have a chain of sausage links you made yourself, ready to grill for that coed party. Make sure you tell your guests it’s BYOB—Bring Your Own Bread—because you could definitely use some at this type of sausage party.

You can learn more about sausage making, or even enroll in Ben Turley’s hands-on class, at **The Meat Hook’s** affiliated store, **The Brooklyn Kitchen**.

Erik Trinidad is an author, writer, designer, food critic, world traveler, and all-around “Freelance Renaissance Man,” whose work can be seen on The Huffington Post, Food Network/Cooking Channel, and Discovery.com websites, as well as his own travel and food sites, **TheGlobalTrip.com** and **FancyFastFood.com**. Follow him on Twitter @theglobaltrip and @fancyfastfood; on facebook.com/theglobaltrip and facebook.com/fancyfastfood; youtube.com/theglobaltrip and youtube.com/fancyfastfood; and “theglobaltrip” on Instagram.

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