SMOKED · ADVANCED

Homemade Pastrami on the Kamado: Brine-Cured, Hickory-Smoked and Steam-Finished

Beef brisket cured for five to seven days in a brine with curing salt, smoked over hickory at 110 °C and finished in steam until the probe slides in with no resistance. This is not a brisket with spices on it: it is a different dish.



PREP	COOK	SERVINGS	TEMPERATURE
60 min	**480 min**	**12**	**110 °C**

Ingredients

- **2.5 kg** beef brisket (the flat; sold in Spain as "pecho" or "pecho de ternera", and as "brisket" at barbecue butchers), with a 5 mm fat cap
- **4 l** water
- **200 g** coarse sea salt
- **100 g** brown sugar
- **1 dosis** nitrite curing salt, the exact amount the manufacturer specifies for this brine (0.6 % sal nitrificada replaces the sea salt; a concentrate such as Prague Powder #1 is added to it); do not substitute table salt
- **2 cda** yellow mustard seeds, for the brine
- **4 ud** garlic cloves, crushed
- **3 ud** bay leaves
- **1 cdta** whole allspice berries
- **4 cda** black peppercorns, coarsely crushed, for the crust

4 cda coriander seeds, coarsely crushed, for the crust

Method

1 MAKE THE BRINE

Bring 1 litre of the water to the boil with the coarse salt (or the sal nitrificada that replaces it), the sugar, the mustard, the garlic, the bay and the allspice. After 5 minutes turn off the heat; if your product is a concentrate added to the salt, stir in the curing salt in the exact amount stated on its packet until it dissolves. Add the remaining 3 litres of cold water and chill in the fridge to 4 °C or below: the meat never touches warm brine.

2 CURE IN THE BAG FOR 5-7 DAYS

Trim the fat cap on the brisket to about 5 mm and remove the silverskin from the lean side. Put the joint into the HIC Kitchen brining bag, pour in the brine with its spices, squeeze out the air and seal. Lay the bag flat on a tray and keep it on the bottom shelf of the fridge, between 0 and 4 °C, for 5 days if the brisket is around 3 cm thick and up to 7 if it reaches 4 or 5 cm. Turn it once a day.

3 DESALT, DRY AND CRUST

Lift out the brisket, discard the brine and rinse the meat under the tap. Submerge it in clean cold water for 2 hours, changing the water after the first hour, to draw the salt off the surface. Pat it thoroughly dry with kitchen paper. Coarsely crush the pepper and coriander for the crust and coat the joint on every face, pressing it on by hand. Leave it uncovered on a rack in the fridge for 12 to 24 hours: the surface dries and the crust sets.

4 BUILD THE MINION FIRE

Empty the ash from the Monolith Classic Pro 2.0 and fill the firebox with BlackSellig coconut briquettes up to the rim of the fire ring, with a hollow in the centre. Scatter 3 or 4 Weber hickory chunks among the unlit briquettes. Set a firelighter in the hollow with 6 to 8 briquettes on top and light it. Fit deflector and drip tray, close the dome and settle at 110 °C with the vents almost closed before the meat goes in: the smoke should run thin and bluish, not white.

5 SMOKE TO 70 °C

Lay the brisket fat side up on the grate and push one Inkbird IBT-26S probe into the centre of the thickest part; rest a second one beside the meat to read the real temperature at grate level. Set the alarm to 70 °C and do not open the dome. At 110 °C this joint usually takes between 4 and 6 hours to get there, but the probe decides, not the clock. When the alarm sounds, take the brisket out.

6 CARRY ON OR HOLD

At 70 °C the pastrami has taken all the smoke it is going to take. You can move straight on to the steam or let it cool for 30 minutes, wrap it in cling film and keep it in the fridge for up to 3 days to finish another day. This pause is an advantage over brisket: it splits the work across two afternoons and the result does not suffer.

7 STEAM-FINISH TO 93-96 °C

Put 3 or 4 cm of water in a wide pot with a rack and bring to the boil. Sit the brisket on the rack, lower the heat to a steady, gentle steam and cover. Top up with boiling water every 45 minutes. From the second hour check with the Inkbird probe, drying it afterwards: the cable joint is not watertight and must not sit in the steam. Carry on to 93-96 °C, when it slides in with no resistance; fridge-cold, the joint needs 2 to 3 hours.

8 CHILL, SLICE AND SERVE

Let the pastrami cool for 30 minutes, wrap it in cling film and keep it in the fridge for at least 12 hours: cold, the crust settles and the meat cuts into 2 mm slices without falling apart. Slice across the grain with a long, very sharp knife. To serve hot, warm only the slices you are about to eat for 2 or 3 minutes in the steam of the same pot. Rye bread, mustard and pickles.

Editor's tips

- Choose a brisket of even thickness. A piece that runs from 2 to 5 cm cures at two speeds: the thin end comes out salty and the thick end reaches the centre raw. If the butcher only has the whole piece, cut off the thin tip and cure it separately for fewer days.
- Taste for salt before crusting: cut a sliver from the edge after the soak, give it 1 minute in a frying pan and taste it. If it tastes like salt cod, another hour in cold water; once smoked, it can no longer be corrected.
- The hickory chunks go on dry and spread out, never heaped on the lit coals: three or four give thin smoke for hours, and a handful more only adds bitterness to the crust.
- No rack for the pot? Three fist-sized balls of aluminium foil will hold the brisket out of the water; and if the joint will not fit whole with the lid on, cut it in two across before steaming: the cut disappears once sliced. What will not do is letting the meat boil: it turns into a stew and loses its crust.

Gear for this recipe

Monolith Classic Pro 2.0

A 2.5 kg pastrami needs a kamado with a firebox built for a fire lasting hours and a grate where the joint sits whole over the deflector without touching the ceramic. The Monolith Classic Pro 2.0 does both: its firebox holds the load of briquettes the Minion method calls for, and the grate leaves room for the brisket with a drip tray underneath. It comes mounted on a cart, so the working surface for placing probes and lifting the joint out is at hand height, and it is available to buy today. The recipe works on any kamado of 46 cm or more with a deflector; in a small one the brisket brushes the walls and the face nearest the ceramic dries out.

mikamado.es/en/kamados/monolith-classic-pro-2-cart

BlackSellig XXL Pure Coconut Charcoal Briquettes 10 kg

In a smoke lasting hours the fuel has to burn evenly and without surprises, and that is where coconut briquettes have the edge over lump charcoal: uniform size, predictable ignition from one to the next in the Minion method, and little ash, which matters in a long fire because built-up ash chokes the air intake. The BlackSellig XXL coconut-shell briquettes bring no strong aroma of their own, and here that is exactly what you want: the hickory supplies the smoke and the coconut simply holds the 110 °C. The 10 kg bag covers several long cooks.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/blacksellig-coconut-shell-10kg

Weber Hickory Smoking Chunks 1.5 kg

Hickory is the classic pastrami aroma: full-bodied smoke, slightly sweet, that sits well with the pepper and coriander of the crust. The Weber chunks are large pieces that burn slowly; scattered among the unlit briquettes, each one lights as the Minion fire reaches it, so the smoke is spread across the hours rather than concentrated in the first. They are aroma, not fuel: three or four chunks give more than enough smoke for a 2.5 kg joint. They go on dry; soaked, they give no better smoke, only steam and soot on the crust.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/weber-tacos-hickory-15kg

HIC Kitchen turkey brining bag, 61 × 60.7 cm, 9 kg rated load

The most awkward part of homemade pastrami is having four litres of brine and a beef brisket knocking about the fridge for a week. The HIC Kitchen brining bag is designed for whole turkeys: 61 × 60.7 cm and a 9 kg load according to the manufacturer, so a 2 to 3 kg brisket with its liquid goes in with room to spare. Laid flat on a tray it takes up one low shelf, the brine surrounds the meat on every face because there is no space left for it to float, and turning the meat daily means turning the bag. The tray underneath is not optional: if the seal gives, it catches the liquid.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/hic-kitchen-bolsa-salmuera-pavo-61x60

Inkbird IBT-26S WiFi + Bluetooth thermometer

This recipe has two temperature milestones and neither can be seen from outside: 70 °C at the end of the smoke and 93-96 °C at the end of the steam. A probe thermometer that stays in the meat avoids opening the dome, and the Inkbird IBT-26S adds WiFi to the Bluetooth: during a smoke lasting hours, the readings and alarms reach your phone from inside the house, without depending on the range out on the patio. One probe in the centre of the joint and another beside the grate warn you if the Minion fire drifts from 110 °C before the dome thermometer shows it. In the steam the probe is used to check, not left in: the probe-to-cable joint is not watertight.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/inkbird-ibt-26s-wifi

Full recipe at: mikamado.es/en/recetas/pastrami-casero-ahumado-kamado

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