

Old-Fashioned Smoked Venison Jerky Recipe

By Chris Sykes

Hunting season is in full swing, and there’s no better way to preserve your deer than with a tried-and-true method: old-fashioned deer jerky. I recently came across a recipe that takes me back to the basics, using simple ingredients and traditional techniques to create a savory, chewy snack perfect for long days in the woods. Forget the high-tech gadgets—this recipe is all about slow smoking and natural flavors. Ready to turn your harvest into something timeless? Here’s how!

- Ingredients:**
- 2 lbs venison
 - 1/4 cup kosher salt
 - 1 tbsp cracked black pepper
 - 1 tbsp garlic powder
 - 1 tsp onion powder
 - 1 tbsp ground paprika (optional, for a slight color and flavor boost)
 - 1 tbsp sugar (optional)
 - 1 tbsp ground mustard (optional for a tangy flavor)
 - 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar or water

Wood chips for smoking (Hickory, apple, or mesquite work great for jerky)

Instructions:

Prepare the Venison:

Trim all fat and sinew from the venison. Fat doesn’t dry well and can make the jerky spoil faster.

Slice the venison into thin strips about 1/8 to 1/4 inch thick. For chewier jerky, cut with the grain; for more tender jerky, cut against the grain.

Tip: Partially freeze the meat for 30 minutes to make it easier to slice uniformly.

Dry Cure the Meat:

In a large bowl, mix together the salt, black pepper, garlic powder, onion powder, paprika, sugar, and ground mustard.

Add the apple cider vinegar or water to moisten the dry rub.

Toss the venison strips in the seasoning mixture, ensuring each piece is coated evenly.

Place the seasoned meat in a non-metallic container or ziplock bag, and let it cure in the refrigerator for 12 to 24 hours. The salt will draw out moisture from the meat and intensify the flavor.

Prepare the Smoker:

Preheat your smoker to 155-175°F. You want a low temperature to dry the jerky without cooking it too fast.

Choose wood chips that complement the venison flavor. Hickory gives a robust, smoky flavor, while applewood is milder and sweeter.

Soak the wood chips in water for 30 minutes before adding them to the smoker, as this helps generate more smoke and extends their burn time.

Smoke the Venison:

Lay the venison strips on the smoker racks, ensuring they don’t overlap.

Smoke the jerky for 4-8 hours or until it reaches the desired dryness. Flip the strips halfway through smoking for even drying.

Keep the smoker temperature between 150-175°F. If your smoker runs hot, you may need to periodically check the jerky to avoid overcooking.

Check for Doneness:

The jerky is done when it bends but doesn’t break and feels dry to the touch. The inside should no longer be moist, but it shouldn’t crumble either.

Cool and Store:

Allow the jerky to cool completely before storing.

Store the jerky in an airtight container at room temperature for a few days, or refrigerate or freeze it for longer storage.

Tips for Best Results:

Meat Thickness: Consistent thickness ensures even drying. Thicker strips will result in chewier jerky, while thinner strips will dry faster and be more brittle.

Traditional Flavors: To keep it simple and authentic, you can omit any sugar or extra seasonings and stick with just salt, pepper, and garlic.

Wood Choices: Experiment with different wood chips to match your taste. Hickory is strong, applewood is mild, and mesquite has a bold, distinct flavor.

This old-fashioned method results in a rich, smoky, savory venison jerky that’s perfect for long-lasting snacking!

Storing jerky in a paper

bag is actually a traditional method that can work well for short-term storage, particularly if the jerky is thoroughly dried. Here’s what you should know about storing jerky in paper bags:

Why Store Jerky in a Paper Bag?

Air Circulation: Paper allows the jerky to “breathe,” which can prevent moisture buildup. This reduces the risk of mold growth, especially if the jerky still has any residual moisture.

Old-Fashioned Storage: Before modern plastic bags and vacuum-sealing, hunters and pioneers often stored jerky in paper bags, sacks, or cloth, making it a classic method.

Short-Term Storage:

Paper bags are best for jerky that’s going to be consumed within 1-2 weeks, as they offer minimal protection against air and humidity over the long term.

How to Store Jerky in a Paper Bag

Ensure Proper Drying: Make sure the jerky is thoroughly dried. Jerky that still has moisture can spoil or grow mold more easily in a paper bag since it won’t be sealed off from air exposure.

Cool Completely: Let the jerky cool fully before placing it in the paper bag. If it’s still warm, condensation may form inside the bag, leading to moisture issues.

Use a Clean, Dry Paper Bag: Choose a plain,

untreated paper bag, like a brown lunch bag. Ensure it’s clean and dry before putting the jerky inside.

Store in a Cool, Dry Place: Keep the paper bag in a cool, dry place like a pantry. Avoid places with high humidity, as paper won’t protect against moisture.

Monitor Regularly: If the jerky feels moist or you notice any mold forming, discard the batch immediately. Paper bags can’t preserve jerky as long as airtight containers, so check it every few days.

Alternative Storage Options:

For longer-term storage or to preserve jerky more reliably:

Vacuum-seal the jerky

for the best shelf life.

Airtight containers or Mason jars can also be good for medium-term storage (up to a month).

Refrigerate or freeze the jerky if you’re making a large batch and want it to last for months.

Storing jerky in a paper bag is a great option if you’re looking for a classic method and plan to eat the jerky relatively quickly. However, if you want to store it for longer periods, it’s better to use airtight or vacuum-sealed containers to prevent moisture and spoilage. USDA guidelines recommend that jerky should be heated to an internal temperature of 160°F.

Put the Brothers to work for you

- Office and Business Printing
- Signs, Banners, and much more



Vinyl Banners
High-Quality Custom
Vinyl Banners



Customer Service at Sykes Brothers Printing

Signs made: All sizes and Colors

Graphic Design Services Available

541-676-9228

541-276-2152

Two locations to serve you:

177 N. Main St Heppner

25 SW Emigrant Pendleton

chris@rapidservice.net

Text and cell: 541-215-2274

Call the Brothers & Discuss Your Next Project