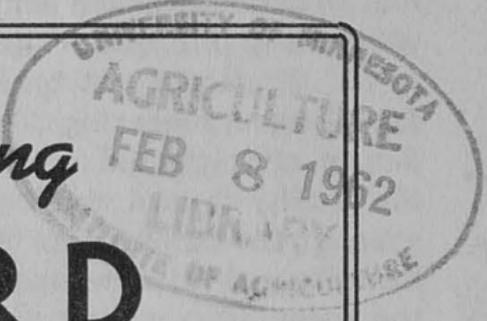


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Making
LARD
at Home



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● ANIMAL fats to be rendered for cooking purposes should, first of all, be fresh and in the best possible condition. This means that they should be rendered as soon as possible and be free from objectionable odors or flavors in order to have good cooking and keeping qualities. Pork fat that is old and poorly handled makes lard that will not keep well. ●

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Chill Fat Promptly

Pork fat or any other fat intended for rendering should be chilled properly as soon as the animal is butchered and kept at a low temperature until ready for rendering. Pork fat stored at 32° to 35° F. should not be kept longer than 5 to 7 days before rendering. The sooner you start rendering after the fat is chilled, the better will be the quality of lard obtained. Long holding periods, even in the freezer, are not conducive to quality lard. Rancid fat develops in storage which lowers the palatability rating.

If a delay of a few days is necessary before processing, take these precautions: (1) Do not grind until ready to render. (2) Spread the fat so that complete chilling is possible. (3) Store the fat in clean, shallow containers to avoid danger of heating. (4) Cover with clean wrapping paper or toweling. (5) Do not expose the fat to the light more than necessary. (6) Keep away from objectionable odors.

Separate Different Kinds of Fat

Leaf or kidney pork fat may be rendered separately from the bulk fat and used for special baking and frying purposes. This lard is firmer and has better flavor and texture. Leaf fat will yield 90 to 91 percent of leaf lard, if carefully rendered. Intestinal fat has a strong flavor; it should not be mixed with fats trimmed from the carcass. This intestinal fat is best used for soap or rendered for salvage.

Preparing Fat for Rendering

In preparing fat for rendering, you may cut it into cubes or run it through a chopper. If a power grinder is at hand, use this very quick method. But avoid getting the fat heated in grinding; see that the plates and knives are sharp and properly adjusted. If the carcass has been scalded well and the skin is clean, fat may be cut with the rind on—although too much rind will give the lard a softer body.

It is preferable to remove the rind. This is easily done by first cutting the fat into strips about 1 inch wide. Then, with the strip lying skin-side-down on a flat surface, separate an end or corner of the skin. Hold the strip by that corner while you slide the knife all the way along the skin under the fat. Remove all meat portions from fat; those turn crisp and brown in rendering and cause off-

color lard. Fat from skinned hogs should be clean. Trim off the soiled parts.

Render "Dry"—Avoid Burning

Render fat in clean kettles; avoid rusty utensils. Stainless steel or aluminum is highly satisfactory. **Do not use copper.** Rendering is not difficult if fat is in good condition. Two precautions are important. (1) Do not overheat or burn the fat. Maintain a temperature between 235° and 245° F. before rendering fat. (2) Render to the point when the fat is "dry" or free from excess water.

A large kettle, shallow pan, or pressure cooker may be used. Kettle rendering probably is the most common method. Place a small quantity of water in the kettle to keep the fat from burning. Begin with a low heat, increasing the temperature as the fat breaks down. Stir frequently to prevent sticking and burning. Frequent stirring will whiten the lard. Render until bubbling stops (indicating that excessive water has been driven off) and cracklings are floating on the surface. Cracklings are a medium chestnut color and break down very easily by exerting pressure on them. Overcooking or overrendering lowers lard quality.

Strain Fat Before Storing

After rendering has been completed, strain the fat by using at least a double thickness of good cheesecloth or a good wire milk strainer with a double layer of cheesecloth. Cracklings may be allowed to settle before straining, or forced to settle by sprinkling a small portion of fine salt over the floats. Strain into tempered jars or tins which have been previously washed, scalded, and dried. It is preferable to strain first into a large temporary vessel for ease of handling. This provides an opportunity for stirring the fats together and results in a whiter lard.

Avoid excessive stirring, however, because it incorporates air or oxygen into the lard and causes early rancidity. Stir enough to keep the liquid and more solid fats together. Rapid cooling is best. Store lard in a dark, cool place. Avoid exposure to light. Containers should be filled as nearly to the top as possible. Cover containers well after the fat has hardened. When removing lard for kitchen use, leave little or no fat adhering to the sides of the container. Otherwise that fat will eventually become rancid and hasten spoilage of the remaining lard.

Antioxidants or Stabilizers

The USDA Regional Laboratory recommends 2 to 3 pounds of hydrogenated vegetable shortening to every 50 pounds of lard just before settling and separating of the cracklings. Be sure to mix well with fat by stirring.

There are other antioxidants on the market that are patented preparations. These are obtainable from locker plants and other suppliers. They may be used, but follow the manufacturer's directions carefully. These preparations will extend the storage life of lard that is well rendered. Do not assume them to be cure-alls for poorly handled fat or careless rendering methods.

Causes of Poor-Keeping Lard

- Fat partially rancid before rendering.
- Fat from unfinished hogs.
- Insufficient rendering to remove water in fat.
- Overheating and sediment.
- Poor containers—exposure to heat and light.
- Too much stirring.
- Musty and other objectionable odors in storage.
- Storage at temperatures above 50° F.

Combining Fats

Beef fat is rendered by the shallow-pan method and handled the same as pork fat. Beef fat is a hard fat; it will firm up pork fat that is inclined to be soft. Ten percent may be added to pork fat with good results. Use only fresh, clean fat from young beef. Also, 3 to 5 percent lamb and mutton fat may be combined satisfactorily with pork fat.

Renovating Slightly Rancid Lard

Very rancid lard cannot be reworked successfully. Slightly rancid lard may be heated carefully with the addition of 3 or 4 average size, finely sliced potatoes to 10 or 15 pounds of lard. Heat until potatoes have become quite dark brown in color, but avoid burning. Strain the lard carefully into new containers. Carrots may be used in place of potatoes if desired.

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