



How to...

Cook a Whole Hog

Roasting an entire pig for a large crowd is very exciting and can be lots of fun. In fact, pig roasts have been a way of celebrating many different events all over the world for centuries now. You will need at least 2 people, the right equipment, and plenty of time and patience. It may be best to hire a caterer or 'whole hog barbeque' company: check your lo-

Method for cooking one whole 80 lb (36 kg) hog, barbecued slowly on a grill, with smoke:

1. Planning

- Order your hog from a butcher at least a week in advance. All hogs should be stamped with proof of government inspection.
- Suckling pigs are usually 10-25 pounds (4.5 - 11 kg); whole hogs usually range from 70 -120 pounds (32 - 55 kg). Allow at least one pound (500 g) total raw weight per guest. Typically an 80 lb (36 kg) hog easily feeds 70 hungry people.
- Rent a cooking unit: If you do not have a suitable unit on which to cook, order one well in advance. Find out the dimensions of the hog and of the smoking unit/barbecue so that you don't find yourself in the unfortunate situation where the hog is longer than the cooking surface. The cooking unit should have a water pan(s) situated directly below the grill, and a thermometer incorporated into the design.
- An 80 lb (36 kg) hog will take at least 12 hours using the method below. Give yourself plenty of lead time so that you will be ready for your guests on time!

2. Equipment

- 6 - 20 lb (9 kg) bags of charcoal
- 5 lb (2.2 kg) of wood chips (hickory or other)
- 5 cups (1.25 L) BBQ rub (see our "[All-Purpose Barbeque Rub](#)" for a good home-made version, or buy a commercial brand)
- A separate charcoal BBQ or a "chimney", which is a gadget for getting briquettes going, is a useful piece of equipment, available at better BBQ supply outlets
- A table and large cutting boards large enough to be used for cutting up the cooked hog
- Large shovel for coals
- Knives and roasting fork
- 2 probe or oven-proof thermometers (this is an absolute must!) & one timer

7. Cooking the Hog

- In the separate charcoal BBQ or "chimney" heat about 10 lb (4.5) of the charcoal until glowing, fill water trays with water and place prepared hog on grill.
- Using a shovel, divide hot glowing coals evenly underneath the hog. With each shovel of charcoal, add a handful of wood chips. Place an extra $\frac{3}{4}$ of a shovel-full of coals directly under the shoulder of the hog, and an extra $\frac{1}{2}$ of a shovel-full to coals under leg section. The leg will cook faster than the shoulder, and so it's best to cook the leg area at a slower rate and with less heat.
- Set timer to 40 minutes. During the initial 40 minutes, check the barbecue temperature. It should peak at about 225°F (105°C). Try to keep it within ten degrees of this temperature throughout by adjusting charcoal supply and vents on unit. This takes a bit of trial and error. After each 40 minute period has elapsed, check temperatures and add more charcoal in the same amounts, trying to ensure the leg area is at lower temperature than the shoulder area.
- Place probes (or meat thermometers) in thickest portion of both shoulder and leg. Set final cooking temperatures to 160°F (71°C) for the leg, and 180°F (82°C) for the shoulder.
- With each new shovel of charcoal, add another handful of wood chips. This will add to the "smoky" flavour. It will also temporarily cause a temperature spike as the chips burn. You can soak the chips beforehand in water to lessen this effect, but it's not necessary.
- Keep adding charcoal, checking temperatures, and making sure the water trays don't run dry.
- Try to manage it so that the (quicker-cooking) leg is cooking slower than the shoulder. Ideally it should be about five to 15 degrees cooler than the shoulder. But don't get frustrated if this doesn't happen.
- When the final temperatures are nearly reached, slow down or accelerate cooking accordingly by adjusting charcoal supply and playing with the vents.
- Make sure all your other foods and drinks are ready for your guests.
- Place the cutting boards on the table, which is then placed close and parallel to the hog. Give yourself plenty of room to place carved meat.
- To remove the hog from the grill for carving, at least two people must put on heavy gloves or oven mitts (to save ruining the gloves cover these with plastic or zip-lock bags). With one person on each end of the hog, grab both sides of the legs and shoulders and rock the hog gently to release it from the grill. Then, in one movement, transfer to the table.

5. Carving

- Carving a whole hog produces large amounts of juice and fat, so before cutting, lay cardboard around table, and do not perform this operation anywhere where grease stains are going to be a problem.
- First, remove an area of skin on one side of the hog by making a cut in the skin all along the spine from top of neck to the tail. Then, at right-angles to the first cut, cut down leg from the tail, and down the shoulder at the neck. Then, pull away the skin from one large rectangular area, exposing one entire flank.
- With a sharp knife, carefully remove the loin meat in one piece, then carve the shoulder and leg meat. There will be a fair amount of meat attached to the belly skin, which can, and should, be sliced off and served. Repeat on other side.
- Once as much meat as possible has been removed from both sides of the hog (don't forget the cheek muscle meat, turn the carcass over, and remove tenderloins), remove the head.

If you are not serving immediately, put meat in chafing dishes, and cover. Take care to keep the meat warm (at a safe temperature of at least 140 °F or (60°C).

6. And finally...

Dispose of remains in a responsible manner. Waste left after cooking a hog would be in the same category as any other residential food/organic waste.