

Pickle Curing

Although most hams are dry cured as above, some products referred to as “dry cured” do employ a concentrated liquid brine (10-20% salt) in which the meat pieces are immersed for some time to allow for uniform salt distribution in the tissue. This brine can also contain the cure, spices and, possibly, a starter culture, or these ingredients are added after the salting stage. The principles of pickle curing are the same as with dry curing, except that a liquid brine is used. The product cannot be shaped or formed, although this is not necessary at this stage for some products. Products such as pancetta, when brine cured instead of dry cured, are rolled as whole pork bellies after the brining step.

Injection Curing

Although not common for whole muscle shelf-stable meat products, this process injects the curing ingredients directly into the meat muscle by random injection or artery injection directly into the blood vessels. This artery injection process is most often used on very large bone-in hams. Obviously, the injection curing is a faster, shorter process allowing for rapid salt and cure diffusion throughout the tissue, however the water for the injection medium must be removed during the drying cycle.