



Hangikjöt is an old favourite of the Icelanders. For centuries, they have smoked, pickled and dried food for preservation, and hangikjöt is one of the most delicious of the smoked products. Hangikjöt is not an everyday food, it's usually served at Christmas or as a Sunday treat. It may be eaten either hot or cold, and is traditionally served with cooked potatoes, béchamel sauce, peas and pickled red cabbage.

Making Hangikjöt:

Any meat can be smoked, like mutton/lamb, horse, pork, game bird breasts, etc., but only lamb/mutton are called hangikjöt. Legs, thighs and sides of lamb are well suited for smoking.

Processing the meat:

Clean the meat well, and pickle in brine for 2-4 days, depending on thickness of the pieces. Allow the brine to drip off the meat before smoking it.

Brine for pickling meat:

20 litres water

10 kg coarse salt

500 g sugar

100 g saltpetre

This recipe may be halved for a smaller amount of brine.

Heat the water to boiling and mix in sugar, salt and saltpetre and cook for 5-10 minutes, or until the salt is melted. Strain and cool the liquid. This brine is strong enough for salting small pieces like rúllupylsa and also for salting meat that will be smoked.

Smoking:

Hang up the meat and start the smoking process. Make sure the fire never dies ? the smoking must be constant. Taste check the meat in a week or so ? the meat should taste smoky. If the meat is at all slimy to the touch, or has a rancid taste, it is spoiled and must not be eaten. Smoke for another week and taste the meat again. It should be reddish in colour with a pronounced smoky taste. For even smokier taste, give it another week, but no more than that, or it may become too dry.

When the meat is smoked, it should be hung in a cool, dry place. Meat that has been hung for a while is more easily digested than meat that has not been hung. Hangikjöt can be eaten raw, and is excellent served by wrapping thin slices around pieces of melon.

Cooking and serving:

Home-smoked hangikjöt sometimes needs to be salted during cooking, and sometimes not. Taste it raw to evaluate whether or not you need to cook it in salted water. Cook for about 40 minutes for each kilo of meat, less if you cut it up before cooking. When cooked, remove the cooking pot from the stove, and allow the meat to sit in the cooking liquid for about 30 minutes before removing it. This step may be skipped if the meat is to be served hot.



Leaf Bread (Laufbraud) Recipe

Made of a thin, waferlike dough, this crisp flatbread is a holiday tradition in Iceland. It's first cut into intricate geometric patterns, then deep-fried and saved to be eaten as an accompaniment to Hangikjöt. Traditionally, a special tool called a leaf bread iron is used to cut the patterns, but a sharp knife will be just fine.

Ingredients:-

3 1/2 cups flour

1 tbsp. sugar

1 tsp. baking powder

1 tsp. kosher salt

3 1/2 tbsp. unsalted butter

1 cup plus 2 tbsp. whole milk, heated to 115°

Canola oil, for frying

Method:-

(1) Whisk flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt in a bowl. Using two forks or your fingers, cut butter into flour mixture, forming pea-size crumbles. Stir in milk until dough forms. Transfer dough to a lightly floured surface; knead until smooth. Divide dough into twenty-five 1-oz. balls; working with 1 ball at a time, roll dough into a 7" disk, about 1/16" thick. (Cover remaining dough with a damp towel to prevent dough from drying out.) Using a paring knife and working outwards from the center of disk, cut rows of nested V's 1/4" apart. Use knife to lift the tip of every other V; fold each tip back to cross over the V behind it, pressing the dough to adhere. (See our step by step guide to cutting the leaf bread) Store cut dough disks between parchment paper and cover with a damp towel until ready to fry.

(2) Heat 2" oil in a 6-qt. saucepan until a deep-fry thermometer reads 400°. Fry 1 dough disk at a time, flipping once, until crisp, about 30 seconds. Transfer to paper towels to drain.