

Dry Rubs

ABOUT DRY RUBS

Dry rubs are a mix of spice and dry herbs and they are rubbed into the meat before cooking. They come in a wide range of flavors. There are barbecue spice rubs, chili powder (yes, chili powder is a spice blend), curries, jerk seasoning, sate, Old Bay, Harissa and many, many more. Find some rub recipes you like, make a big batch, and put them in a large spice shaker with a lid. If it clumps or cakes, you can do what waitresses in diners have been doing forever: Dry some rice in the oven or a pan and add it to the jar to absorb the moisture.

You can buy pre-mixed rubs, but they are easy to make yourself, and a lot cheaper and healthier, since most commercial rubs are loaded with salt. Try a few varieties and experiment with variations. But remember, you cannot judge a rub raw. It tastes very, very different after cooking. The juices of the meat mix with the herbs and spices; melt them, and they undergo chemical reactions catalyzed by heat. A rub may taste too hot when raw, but keep in mind there will be a bite-sized piece of food underneath it, diluting it. You may hate rosemary, but you'll never notice it in the blend, after mixing with juices, after cooking, and in with a mouthful of pork.

THE 4 S'S

A good rub is like a good orchestra: it has a range of instruments to play all the notes in harmony. They are:

SUGAR | Sweetness is a common addition because it's a flavor enhancer, it helps browning, and with crust formation. Diabetics often ask me if there is a substitute, and the answer is NO. The chemical properties of sugar are unique. So let's do the math. Let's say you apply 2 teaspoons of Memphis Magic per side of a slab of baby back ribs. It's about 50% sugar. So on a slab of ribs, there are about 2 teaspoons of sugar. During cooking, some of it melts and drips off. So if you eat half a slab you are getting less than 1 teaspoon of sugar. The glycemic load is about 3. Compare that with a slice of white bread with a GL of 10.

SAVORY | There is an herb named savory, and in common language we speak of savory as being a pleasant smell or taste. But in the culinary arts, savory flavors come from amino acids called glutamates, green herbs, some spices, garlic, and other flavorings.

SPICES & HERBS | Not all of them work on all foods, but the spice rack is full of great flavors. Paprika is often included, not so much for flavor as for color.

SPICY | Hot pepper sensations, often called spicy flavors, are frequently used in rubs because they add excitement. But go easy, not everyone likes it as hot as you do. Black pepper is common; so are ground hot peppers such as cayenne or chipotle. Ginger, horseradish, and mustard powder also fit in this category.

Continued...



NO SALT IN RUBS!

Salt penetrates, so the amount we apply depends on the weight of the meat. All the rest are huge molecules that are not very water-soluble (meat is 75% water), and they rarely go beyond 1/8" deep. Spices and herbs are a surface treatment, just like sauces, so the amount we apply depends on the "per square inches" of surface.

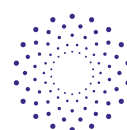
Applying the salt separately and in advance is a very important technique called **dry brining**. Dry brining is simply salting thick cuts the day before cooking, and thin cuts an hour or two before. Adding salt in advance is good for the meat because it melts on the wet surface of meat and it penetrates deep.

Adding spices in advance does little to benefit the meat below the surface because they cannot penetrate.

You need more salt on a pork shoulder than on pork ribs because a shoulder is thicker. You need more salt on rib roast than a ribeye steak, and more on a ribeye steak than on skirt steak. You need more salt on chicken breasts than on thighs or drums. You need more salt on the thick part of a leg of lamb than on the thin part. You don't need more spices on any of these because they don't penetrate. Keeping salt and the other S's separate lets you apply the right amount of each.

There are other good reasons to keep them separate:

1. You do not need *any* salt at all on cured meats like a ham, bacon, or corned beef, but you might want sugar, savory, and spicy.
2. Nowadays, almost all turkeys and many ribs, pork loins, chickens, and other meats are injected with a salt solution either at the processor or at home. And this trend is not going away. Many folks tell me they cannot find ribs that have not been pumped. Meat that is labeled "enhanced" or "flavor enhanced" or "self-basting" or "basted" has been injected with brine at the packing plant. Kosher meat has also been treated with salt at the plant.
3. Some people like more or less salt than others. By keeping it separate you can tailor saltiness to your taste.
4. Some people are on salt-restricted diets, although when you do the math, the salt used in preparing meat, up to 1/2 teaspoon per pound, is way below your limit.
5. Some rubs are mixed with oil, and salt dissolves in water. If you apply it first, the water in the meat will pull it in. Then the oil won't interfere.
6. Leaving salt out of the mix also gives you room to add a finishing salt just before serving. A sprinkle of large grain salt on a steak as soon as it comes off the grill will give it real pop.



Tracey MacRae

University of Washington Campus Executive Chef

Memphis Magic Rub *(makes about 3 cups)*

INGREDIENTS

¾ cup brown sugar, lightly packed
¾ cup white sugar
½ cup paprika
½ cup garlic powder
2 T black pepper, ground
2 T dry ginger, ground
2 T onion powder
1 T dry mustard *(I like Coleman's)*
1 T dry rosemary, crumbled

Break up the brown sugar if it has any lumps. Combine the remaining ingredients and run them through your hands to make sure they are well blended.

Store this in an air-tight jar for up to 3 months out of the light.

I use this for pork, poultry and veggies.

Scarborough Herb Blend *(makes about 1.5 cups)*

INGREDIENTS

4 T dry parsley, crumbled
4 T dry sage, crumbled *(rubbed is fine)*
2 T dry rosemary, crumbled
2 T dry thyme, crumbled
2 T dry oregano, crumbled
2 T dry basil, crumbled
2 T dry bay leaf, crushed
2 T black pepper, ground
2 T white sugar

You can crumble or crush the herbs with your fingers, with a mortar and pestle, or in a spice grinder. Combine all the ingredients.

Store this in an air-tight jar for up to 3 months out of the light.

I use this rub for poultry, veggies, lamb, and seafood.

Supa Badd Beef Rub *(makes about 1 cup)*

INGREDIENTS

6 T coarse black pepper
2 T white sugar
3 T onion powder
1 T dry mustard *(I like Coleman's)*
2 T garlic powder
1 T ancho chili powder or
dark chili powder
1 T chipotle powder or cayenne

With gloves on, blend all the spices and sugar by rubbing them through your hands until they are well blended.

Store this in an air-tight jar for up to 3 months out of the light.

I use this specifically for beef: ribs, steaks, prime rib, roasts.

