Homemade Beef Jerky

Lost Book of Superfoods by Charlie Evans
allrecipes.com

First, buy the cheapest cuts of unground beef you can find. Expect a pound of beef to make about 6 oz of jerky. Remember that the drying process will break down much of the fat and sinew found in cheap cuts of meat, so there is nothing wrong with saving some money. Let the meat sit out for about an hour to get it to room temperature before working with it.

Next cut all the meat super thin. I suggest getting it as thin as you possibly can, but definitely less than ¼ inch thick. This will help it to dry out faster. Make sure you have a sharp knife that is large enough for the job. [Note: I prefer to put frozen meat in refrigerator until partially thawed, and slice it then for easiest uniform slicing.]

Once it is all cut thin, salt and spice your meat however you like. Both salt and spices help draw moisture out of the meat and also add flavor. Or marinade from 3 hours to overnight.

Marinade ~ enough for 2 lbs beef:

- ½ cup Worcestershire sauce or Dr. Pepper
- ¼-½ cup soy sauce or coconut aminos
- 2 tbs liquid smoke
- 1 tablespoon smoked paprika
- 2 tablespoon honey or brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tsp ginger
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder

Whisk together Worcestershire sauce, soy sauce, smoked paprika, honey, black pepper, red pepper flakes, garlic powder, and onion powder in a large bowl. Add beef; mix until completely coated with marinade. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and marinate in the refrigerator, 3 hours to overnight. Preheat the oven to 175°. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and place a wire rack on top. Transfer beef to paper towels to dry. Discard marinade. Arrange beef slices in a single layer on the prepared wire rack on the baking sheet. Bake in the preheated oven until dry and leathery, 3 to 4 hours. Cut jerky with scissors into bite-sized pieces.

Preheat your oven to 175° F. Remember that making jerky is a drying process, not a cooking process. Do not let your oven get above 175 degrees even if you are in a hurry to finish. Understand that this is a preservation technique. Bacteria requires moisture to form in meat. By drying it out you prevent that bacteria from growing and avoid getting sick from the meat. If you cook the meat and then try to dry it you give the bacteria time to form.

Lay all the meat out on sheet trays, preferably up off the metal. If you have a grate or rack that you can use to elevate the meat, then that is best. Elevating the meat allows air and heat to flow all around it which causes a more even drying. I suggest raising the racks of your oven up as high as they will go to keep the meat furthest away from the hot coil. With the meat cut thin it will take up a great deal of surface area, so you may have to make your jerky in batches. Allow the jerky to sit in the oven for at least six hours before opening it to check the meat. There is no set time as to how long this process will take. Typically it takes between 8 and 12 hours in the oven, and about 4½ hours in a dehydrator.

To see if the jerky is done, first squeeze a piece between your thumb and finger. If it squishes like the interior is still a bit soft, then it is not done. Also if any juices run out when you squeeze it, then the jerky needs more time. If you are still unsure, bend a piece in half. If the jerky is done it will start to crack at the bend, but it will not come completely apart. Be aware that homemade jerky looks nothing like what you buy in the store. It will probably be a darker color, and it will probably be more shriveled up versus being nice flat sheets. Let your jerky cool at room temperature for several hours. Once it is completely cool, store your jerky in an airtight container such as a zipper bag or a plastic storage container. Your finished product should last months if not longer, but it tastes good enough that it will take some restraint not to eat it all right away.

Campfire Jerky: (see Lost Book of Superfoods)