Trends Report

On the heels of the house made charcuterie trend that swept restaurants nationwide, fresh sausage has found its stage presence as a center of the plate specialty, with or without the traditional bun. Even at quick-serve restaurants, sausage has outpaced other pork dishes like ribs, and it’s moved beyond just the breakfast daypart, according to foodservice research firm Technomic.

“The whole nose-to–tail, house made charcuterie, butchering in-house and locavore trends of the previous few years are all starting to come together – in the form of encased meat,” says Dave Derr of The Weiner Wagon in Kansas City.

Forget about just basic hot dogs and brats. Trend-setting food trucks have led the fresh sausage “movement” with their innovative creations, encasing pork with everything from beer and blueberries to truffle and chilies, and restaurant chefs have since jumped on board.

**Playful Pairings**

Chefs have taken the classics a step further, with some fresh sausages really pushing the envelope when it comes to homemade encased meats. In fact, making sausages in-house rather than simply relying on artisan producers allows more room for experimentation with different flavors, ingredients, meats and textures, with pork as the base.

Specialty sausage classics like Polish, Italian and chorizo have grown in volume over the past two years (13MM pounds), especially among full-service restaurants and at dinnertime, according to Technomic. Italian sausage reigns as the popular favorite, at 58 percent of total specialty sausage volume, but chorizo has been growing at the most aggressive rate.

Keenan Goldis, owner of Goldis Sausage Company, a food truck in Austin, Texas, draws inspiration for his innovative creations from taste experiences at other restaurants. His Hawaiian pizza inspired sausage is made with ground pork shoulder, pepperoni, tomato powder, pineapple chunks, mozzarella, oregano and crushed red pepper, ground together and stuffed in a natural
pork casing, and served simply on a bun.

“I try to get an entire meal to be in a sausage casing,” Goldis says, explaining his reasoning for a lack of toppings and simple serving style – toasted bun or sliced and plated. He’s even stuffed side dishes like mac and cheese in a ground pork mix, and his apple pie sausage comes with chunks of apple sautéed in butter and even includes pie crust. The blueberry mint maple version with seasonal blueberries cooked in balsamic and maple syrup also pushes the sweet meets savory sausage envelope.

Derr of The Weiner Wagon starts with his favorite dishes to come up with innovative sausage ideas. For example, his love of eggs benedict expresses itself as a bacon benedict sausage with hollandaise sauce, made from pork fatback mixed together with belly and shoulder. At breakfast, a sausage might come on a New England style bun served with sausage gravy and a fried egg. At lunch, it comes as a BLT with garlic aioli, shredded romaine and homegrown tomatoes. At dinnertime, the sausage might come with a corn, edamame and hominy succotash. “As a chef I try to figure out how to present the sausage differently,” he says.

Innovation must begin with the basics though, says Derr, from investing in the right grinders, sausage stuffers, and measuring utensils for recipe development and consistency, to making sure the equipment and environment is cold while working. After seasoning and “marinating” the meat for four to 24 hours like any traditional sausage, the mixing process opens up the possibilities for experimentation. Sometimes, in place of simple water used in emulsified fresh sausage making, he might use beer. His green chile sausage combines Pacifico beer with chilies, baja seasoning, and Valentina, a smooth, Mexican hot sauce, and Deer serves it simply, on a bun.

Texture twists also plays into the trend. At Frank in Austin, Texas, Chef Daniel Northcutt likes to “experiment with different mouthfeel and texture,” he says, by preparing the fresh sausages, then poaching and finishing them on the grill. For a take on a Reuben sandwich, Northcutt prepared the daily special by mixing corned beef with pork and crunchy sauerkraut. Adding texture-varied toppings is also part of the fun. Frank’s Texalina beef and pork sausage comes with a grilled horseradish coleslaw and mustardy Carolina-based barbecue sauce for added crunch. Customers can also swap in the fried fennel normally atop a vegetarian sausage for any other sausage for a licorice bite.

**Center of the Plate**

Thanks to a growing interest in sausage, encased meats have been increasingly pushed into the spotlight as center of the plate items served with their own special sides and innovative toppings. Their increase in popularity at dinnertime seems to have helped the center of the plate trend; according to Technomic, specialty sausage served later in the day has outpaced lunch volume at 43
percent, compared to 39 percent, respectively. Specialty sausage sees more volume at dinner than even breakfast at 13 percent and snacks at just five percent.

Chef Anthony Piscioneri of DC-3 in Washington D.C. gets inspiration for his toppings and sides from the ingredients in the sausages and their cuisine type. His homemade Italian sausage partners with fresh mozzarella, tomato bruschetta, balsamic vinegar reduction and basil aioli on buttery brioche. From the specials menu, a traditional Wisconsin brat might pair up with fried cheese curds, while a chorizo sausage comes with a blistered tomatillo sauce or cilantro-lime sauce, chayote slaw, Latin crema and queso fresco.

On “The Butcher” section of his menu, Chef Justin Brunson, of Old Major in Denver, CO offers a Hatch Green Chile sausage on his menu made with New Mexican green chiles, pork and spices. He serves the dish with roasted tomatillo, radish, Olathe sweet corn, lime crema, cilantro, grilled onion and avocado.

At Osteria in Philadelphia, James Beard Award winning Chef Jeff Michaud serves “Ciareghi” Cotechino with soft polenta and sunny-side up egg. The housemade cotechino is spiced with cinnamon, black pepper, allspice, nutmeg, clove and white wine.

**Multi-Meat Encasing**

Sausage doesn’t always have to be 100 percent pork – but, chefs find the versatile meat serves as a perfect base for binding textures, especially when working with delicate seafood, and for mellowing out stronger flavors found in game meats.

“Pork is great as a base because it mellows things out, adds a good fat ratio and smooths out other flavors and textures,” says Northcutt, who blends ground pork with rabbit and antelope for a quirky "jackelope" sausage with cranberry compote and tangy-hot sriracha sauce. Still, he keeps things consistent with a 50/50 meat/fat ratio that always includes pork.

Chef Mark Steuer of Carriage House in Chicago has also experimented with rabbit in fresh sausages. In his low country boil, he combines the meat with pork shoulder and belly for fat, and seasons the mixture with spices like cayenne, paprika, cumin, black pepper, chili powder, thyme and celery seed. “It’s kind of a cross between a Spanish Chorizo and andouille with a twist,” he says.
At Salt and Cleaver, a new dining concept based on the ancient art of sausage making in San Diego, Executive Chef Carlos Sanmartano uses pork to tone down any strong game flavors. For instance his homemade duck and bacon sausage with garlic, leeks, tarragon includes pork as the base. The sausage is then topped with an orange marmalade-duck confit as a way to “have some fun playing with different proteins and fats.” “We’re not reinventing the wheel as much as offering a different vessel for a classic dish like duck a lá orange,” he says.

At Hot Doug’s, Doug Sohn sources a smoked shrimp and pork sausage from an artisan sausage maker in New Orleans. The "Shrimp 'n' Grits" menu item includes smoked shrimp and pork sausage with creole mustard, hominy grits and goat cheese. "It's a classic Cajun-style pork sausage, not quite as spicy as Andouille, but in the same style, and with Gulf Coast shrimp added to the sausage mix," says Sohn.

Old World is New Again
Chefs are going beyond the basic brat by taking them a step further – introducing new spices and ingredients into the mix and experimenting with other takes on German classics as well as old world sausages from other parts of the world. Phillip Lopez, executive chef at the recently opened Root in New Orleans, makes a German bloodwurst sausage adapted from the traditional poached beef tongue sausage.

For his take, Lopez mixes pork, blood and fat back with cinnamon, clove, and all spice, then blends in beef tongue that was sous vided, pickled and smoked to tenderize and tone down strong flavors. “We then peel the tongue and cut it down in strips, laying out the pork meat around it in a square and then rolling the sausage by hand between four and five inches thick in diameter." Lopez finishes the elaborate encased sausage by poaching it sous vide style to cook the rest of the way and serves it as part of the “sausage fest” platter with flatbread, pretzel buns and pickled vegetables.

Lopez has even experimented with Swedish sausage, adding a twist to classic cervelat, traditionally made with veal brain. “We switched to sweet breads,” he says. Poached and smoked sweet breads are mixed with pork in larger chunks, and then served as halved or quartered medallions. “Cervelat is different from other sausages because it is smoked first, then poached, while many fresh sausages are poached first then smoked.”
At Root, Lopez also makes morcilla, a traditional Spanish blood sausage with pork meat and belly, pork blood, smoked paprika, cinnamon, clove, all spice and Spanish-style, short grain rice cooked with onions and fresh herbs. “In the Basque region close to France you might find apples added to the sausage,” he says, noting that he also adds milk-soaked bread crumbs to help further emulsify the sausage and sherry for some extra tartness. The sausage is then slow-poached in a court bouillon stock before chilled or served.

Ethnic Flair
From twists on chorizo to Asian-inspired versions, fresh sausage has become a perfect vehicle for experimenting with global cuisines.

At Laurelhurst Market Restaurant and Butcher Shop in Portland, head butcher Spencer Adams makes a pork shoulder-based green chorizo sausage with cilantro, jalapeño, and roasted poblano peppers mixed with Mexican oregano, cumin and coriander. The restaurant has paired the sausage with mussels in a fennel and white wine broth served with frites.

At Root, Lopez passes up traditional chorizo for salchichas, a Mexican-style, emulsified fresh sausage traditionally served at breakfast or as a mid-day snack. Pork meat is spiced with cumin, cinnamon, clove, nutmeg, all spice, chili flakes and fresh cilantro, then blended with eggs, a little cream and fat back for a deliciously creamy texture.

Goldis of Goldis Sausage Company looks to Asian flavors when experimenting with new sausages. For his green curry version, Goldis blends a homemade green curry paste with peanuts, Thai basil and cilantro. His newest creation, a Pad Thai sausage, combines pork with tamarind beans and paste, ground peanuts and chiles, that he serves on a classic bun.

“I feel Asian ingredients are underutilized in sausage,” he says. “You can put almost any Asian flavor inside a sausage casing as long as you know how to incorporate it right.”

At Salt and Cleaver, Sanmartano’s homemade pork sausage, which experiments with Asian flavors, is a guest favorite. The pork belly is incorporated with a lemongrass-ginger relish, and then the sausage is topped with a pickled cucumber relish, rice vinegar radishes and sambal vinaigrette like a bahn mi of sorts. “Sausage is like a blank canvas for so many other flavors,” Sanmartano says.

What began as a slew of restaurants opening up their own butcher shops has led to a burgeoning back-of-house movement with chefs making their own artisan, signature fresh sausages. From pork belly to sweet breads, Asian flavors to nutmeg and clove, chefs have opened their meat racks and spice racks to
reinvent today’s sausages. The possibilities remain endless, as long as they’re based on traditional techniques, and, pork is used as a base. No longer a simple sandwich or ballpark snack, the encased meat has a new position as a profit-making, plate-forward protein and vehicle for continued creativity.

“It’s truly inspiring to see all the things we can do with sausages,” says Northcutt. “Chefs are really starting to rediscover sausage and it’s fun to be a part of that.”

It’s clear – fresh sausage is the new charcuterie. And pork is the base of it all, literally.
Determining Pork Quality

And a bit about Pork Color and Marbling Standards

The quality of fresh pork can vary greatly based on a number of factors. Variations in pork quality can look different, taste different when cooked, and perform differently when brining, curing or smoking. High quality pork is worth more than lower quality pork. Quality can be evaluated through simple visual appraisal, or it can be determined more precisely with scientific tests such as measuring the meat's ability to refract light, the ultimate pH of the meat, or tenderness of the cooked meat using the Warner-Brasseler shear test. Taste and preference studies have shown that fresh, whole muscle pork delivers a tender, juicy eating experience when it falls into the Reddish pink, Firm and Non-exudative color, texture and exudation measurements. Some degree of intramuscular fat or marbling can also improve the flavor and moisture of the meat. Great pork can be produced from all breeds and cross breeds of pork and from many different sources. Understanding the factors that matter when converting muscle into meat will help you find the best pork quality for your money.

COLOR - TEXTURE – EXUDATION


RFN: Reddish pink, Firm and Non-exudative. IDEAL. Desirable color, firmness and water-holding capacity.
DFD: Dark purplish red, very Firm and Dry. Firm and sticky surface, high water-holding capacity.

To learn more visit our website:
http://porkfoodservice.com/MeningPork/278/PorkQuality.aspx
Before Chef Bruce Aidells came along, sausage was something you ate with eggs in the morning or picked up from the butcher for a special cookout. But in 1983 Bruce launched a revolution when he started crafting creative artisanal sausages.

The great success of Aidells Sausage allowed Bruce to leave the sausage company to pursue recipe consulting and writing. Soon after, he became America's "go-to guy" for all issues involving meat and meat cookery. Winning numerous awards including a nomination for a James Beard Award in 1999 for *The Complete Meat Cookbook*.

From founder of the eponymous sausage company to award-winning author, it’s no wonder Aidells is better known as “The King of Meat.” The National Pork Board had a chance to speak with the “King” to discuss his food philosophies and the appeal of fresh sausage on today’s menu.

**NPB:** After years of crafting handmade sausages, running your own gourmet sausage company and being an expert author on all things meat, you have been honored with the title of “King of Meat.” What and who inspired you to become a chef and eventually a sausage maker?

**Chef:** My main inspiration would be my tummy; I realized if I wanted to eat well, I would need to learn how to cook. Growing up my mother was a convenience cook so we ate out a lot; fortunately, this came with a few benefits. I was able to taste food that was better than my mother’s, and I got to experiment with different types of cuisine – Chinese, Latin, Italian, etc.

I would say the most influential person in my career is Julia Child. I taught myself how to cook through her TV shows and books, especially the Time-Life: Foods of the World series. Also during my senior year in college my roommate had a subscription to Gourmet Magazine. I basically cooked through each issue. My wife, Chef Nancy Oakes, also inspires me. She gets up each day to make her patrons happy by striving to cook food to the highest standard.

**NPB:** Can you tell us what your food philosophy is today?
**Chef:** Absolutely, my philosophy is to cook with the best ingredients possible. Also I always want to motivate people to get into the kitchen. I’d rather people eat a simple meal they’ve cooked themselves than a precooked meal, and if I have been able to help inspire them, that makes me happy.

With my academic background, I also feel it’s my duty to be a mentor. I feel it’s important to teach people how to cook a proper pork chop using the right method and to the proper temperature. That way they enjoy their food, and know what good food tastes like.

**NBP:** What were the circumstances that eventually led you to open Aidells sausage?

**Chef:** Like I said, in college I explored cooking through cookbooks and TV shows. When I went to grad school for my Ph.D. in biology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, I learned that my fellow students and faculty were prepared to pay good money for food. Knowing this, I opened a small campus restaurant in an apartment. I was an amateur, but I cooked food for free and tried recipes from all over the world.

Unfortunately the government was about to pull funding for my lab, but around the same time a woman who wanted to open a chicken deli approached me. We opened Poulet in Berkeley in 1979, where I was the charcuterie chef and co-owner.

A few years later I was actually fired, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Andouille sausage was very popular at the time and I had a house payment to make so I decided to make my own sausages and sell them to chefs in the bay area. This business grew into Aidells Sausage. I had truly humble beginnings. I started with batches that made less than one hundred pounds, and the sausages were delivered in brown paper bags.

**NBP:** What are your thoughts on the recent resurgence of chef’s interest in making cured and aged meats?

**Chef:** I’m thrilled because I write cookbooks about sausage making and hopefully I am impacting these chefs. I also think it’s greatly due to different types of pork being available, which has changed over the past 30 years. There are a lot more products now that simply weren’t available back then – different cuts and breeds that offer lots of fat.

I’m a judge in the charcuterie selection at the upcoming Good Food Awards. I’ve been involved in these awards for a while, it used to only have a few states participating, but now there are representatives from all 50 states. It’s wonderful to see how the quality of sausage from both chefs and artisanal makers has changed for the better.
**NPB:** What factors are important in making quality fresh sausage?

**Chef:** It is the upmost importance to use the freshest, cleanest products available to avoid food contamination. Having the proper equipment like sharp grinders, a cold environment and the proper ratio of fat to lean meat is also very important.

You also need to take the proper balance into consideration when making fresh sausage. You don’t want to mask the flavor of the pork so you need to pick spices that complement the meat and do not over power it. For instance, if you use meat from a slower growing, older pig breed, it has a more developed pork flavor – you don’t want to mask this flavor.

**NPB:** Can you take us through a brief description of how you approach making fresh sausage?

**Chef:** In my books *The Complete Book of Pork* and *The Complete Sausage Book* I take the reader through the full method. Most importantly it’s taking quality ingredients – the right amount of pork and fat, using the proper equipment, and maintaining temperature control.

The true art to making fresh sausage is achieving the perfect balance of spices. Once you have made a successful sausage the recipe is totally transferable.

In addition I consider the historical importance of each type of sausage I make. For example if I want to make a Mexican chorizo sausage I don’t want to veer outside of the traditional ingredients.

I also think about the location and the types of food that is grown in the area. To capture the essence of New England I am inspired by a breakfast sausage. Maple syrup and sweet potatoes are both ingredients that are reminiscent of the area and they are a great combination together. Adding the two ingredients to sage and pork or bacon just works really well. I recently made a sausage with a Chinese flavor profile, I used soy sauce and fermented black beans which authentically pair well with pork. It was amazing and true to the flavor profile I was trying to achieve.

Getting my hands on products with great flavor is important too. I was given some amazing artichokes that were packed in olive oil and considering this as my main ingredient; I was inspired to make a sausage with roasted garlic and pork as the base.

Lastly, testing is essential – it is always easier to add spices than it is to take away. After I combine the seasoning and meat I always make a test patty. At this stage I can still fine-tune the ingredients. You have to make a test patty before
encasing or packaging the sausage because at that point it is too late to make changes.

**NPB:** Can you tell us about some of the pork products you incorporate into your sausages and how different cuts impact the end product? Why do you believe pork is a great protein choice for sausage making?

**Chef:** Most sausages are made with pork cuts predicated by classic recipes. For instance Italian recipes typically specify what cuts of pork to use but typically most sausages are made with pork shoulder.

Pork is particular to most sausage mixtures because it’s a fairly neutral flavor that takes well to seasoning. The fat has great texture and blends well; it’s not greasy. Beef fat doesn’t create a great sausage unless emulsified.

**NPB:** What is your favorite flavor profile for fresh pork sausage and how do you recommend serving it as a finished dish?

**Chef:** Tough question. Pork works well with so many different flavor profiles. I guess it depends on what I am craving or the ingredients I have on hand. I recently was craving paella. I only had Spanish chorizo on hand, which was OK because I was able to make an all pork, “poor man’s paella.”

When I grill, it’s typically Italian flavor profiles. Wild fennel seed and pollen are always available where I live, so they are perfect. I serve Italian sausages with grilled garden vegetables. The fennel seed is also a classic pairing with pork belly to make Porchetta.

The premise of my book, *Flying Sausages*, provides simple, savory recipes for creating sausages. The book focuses on seven different spice blends that can be used to make multiple dishes.

Another pairing I love is sage, nutmeg and Berkshire pork. It makes a perfect breakfast sausage patty and pairs perfectly with fried eggs and blackberry jam. I like the patties for breakfast instead of links, because they brown really well which provides that delicious extra layer of flavor.

**NPB:** Can you tell us about *The Great Meat Cookbook*, *The Complete Book of Pork*, and *the Complete Sausage Cookbook*, and the process you went through to write these influential books? In terms of the sausage craft industry, why do you think it was so important to write them?
Chef: I started with *The Complete Meat Cookbook* fifteen years ago. When writing any of my books I start with recipes that are laying around the house – right now my dining room table is covered in recipes. From there I make sure to have recipes from my favorite flavor profiles and all the important ethnic groups. It’s also about how the food is prepared. I want to make sure I am incorporating different cooking methods to provide well-rounded recipes.

I have also been able to share some of my friends’ recipes in my books. For example Franco and Tom’s Award Winning Sausage Stuffed Pork Belly is one of my favorite pork sausage recipes.

To me it was very important to write *The Complete Meat Cookbook*. I wanted to share my knowledge with people and mentor them through the cooking process. Teach them how to read food labels, handle different cuts of meat and provide the appropriate cooking methods for each cut. I feel like it is my obligation to remove the wall and educate the consumer.

NPB: What advice would you give to a cook deciding if they should begin making house made fresh sausages?

Make sure to have sharp equipment, chill the equipment and maintain the appropriate temperature environment. Also I need to stress the importance of the appropriate fat to lean protein ratio. When starting, make sure to use a recipe that has been vetted and tested. Once the process is mastered, then one can use the ratio to adapt seasonings and such.

Lastly, don’t make one of my first mistakes. While in England I made thirty pounds of sausage in a tiny apartment, but I didn’t have a place to store the final products!

NPB: What are your favorite pork dishes in the San Francisco bay area and where are they?

My wife always has a pork chop on her menu at Boulevard. Right now it is an Eden Valley Berkshire Pork Prime Rib Chop that has been oven roasted. It is served with black rice, a chorizo-stuffed squash blossom, fresh shell and little pole beans, Marcona almonds and roasted pork jus.

1. Boulevard Restaurant  
   1 Mission St.  
   San Francisco, CA 94105  
   (415) 543-6084  
   www.boulevardrestaurant.com

2. Spare ribs at Ranch 99, a Chinese grocery store  
   3288 Pierce St #99, Richmond, CA
Pacific East Mall
(510) 558-2120
99ranch.com

3. Porchetta at Scopa
109A Plaza St. 109 Plaza St
Healdsburg, CA 95448
(707) 433-5282
www.scopahal longstanding.com
RECIPES – Basic Sausage Ratio

Ingredients

PORK, AS NEEDED
20 grams salt, per kilogram of meat
3 grams black pepper, per kilogram of meat
3 grams garlic, per kilogram of meat

Preparation

Cooking Directions

Grind and mix all ingredients thoroughly until well bound and slightly sticky on the surface.
Make a small test sausage ensure proper seasoning
Stuff in casing, allow sausage to rest

Note: Make sure ingredients and equipment are very cold to start throughout the process and do not enter the food temperature danger zone.
RECIPES - Franco And Tom’s Award Winning Sausage Stuffed Pork Belly

Ingredients

12 to 14 ounces Swiss chard, Christian Finnegan
1 TBL olive oil
1 1/2 cups onions, diced
1 large clove garlic, finely chopped
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes, crushed
1 POUND MILD ITALIAN SAUSAGE, REMOVED FROM CASING OR GROUND PORK
1 large egg, beaten lightly
1 cup bread crumbs, soaked in 1/2 cup of milk
2 TBL currants, OR raisins soaked in hot water until soft, about 15 minutes
3 TBL pine nuts, toasted in a 350 degree oven for 10 minutes until golden
1 teaspoon fresh rosemary, chopped
Pinch of grated nutmeg
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1/2 SKIN-ON PORK BELLY, (ABOUT 5 POUNDS)

Preparation

Cooking Directions

1. To make the stuffing: first prepare the chard by stripping the leaves from the stems. Cut the stems crosswise into ½-inch pieces and the leaves into 1-inch strips; set aside.
2. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat, add the onions, and cook until soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the chard stems and cook until softened, about 3 minutes. Stir in the chard leaves, garlic, red pepper flakes, and cook and toss until the chard is wilted and any liquid that’s been released by the chard has evaporated, about 4 minutes. Put the chard mixture in a medium mixing bowl, and let cool. Add the ground pork and egg. Squeeze the breadcrumbs to remove any remaining milk, and then add to the chard-pork mixture. Drain the currants and add them to the bowl along with the toasted pine nuts, rosemary, nutmeg, 2 teaspoons kosher salt and 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper. Stir until the stuffing is well combined.
3. Prepare the pork belly for stuffing by cutting a pocket in the meat: place belly, skin side up, on work surface. Starting on one long side of the belly, with your knife parallel to the cutting board, insert the knife about ½ inch down from the skin, and 1 inch from side of the belly. Cut to the other side. Be careful not to cut through, stopping about 1 inch from the other side. You have now transformed the belly into a hollow tube. Using a very sharp knife or box cutter, score the skin in diagonal lines in both directions, about ¼ inch apart and cutting no more than about ¼ inch deep, being careful not to cut too deeply into the fat.
4. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
5. Firmly pack the stuffing into the pocket, leaving the pocket open. Don’t worry if some of the stuffing falls out of the opening. Put the stuffed pork belly, skin-side up, on a rack in a roasting pan, sprinkle generously with salt and freshly ground pepper, and place in the oven for approximately 2½ hours or until the meat is tender when pierced with a fork. When the pork is done, if the skin is not golden and crackling crisp, increase the heat to 450°F and continue to roast for another 20 minutes.

6. Remove the pork belly from the oven, tent with foil, and let rest for 20 minutes or up to 45 minutes before cutting into ¾-inch slices. Consider serving the pork belly alongside mashed potatoes or soft polenta.

Source: Bruce Aidells’ Complete Book of Pork
RECIPES – Basic Mexican-Style Chorizo

Ingredients

2 dried ancho chiles, OR New Mexico, California, or guajillo chiles, or a combination
2 teaspoons cumin seed
1/2 teaspoon coriander seed
3 POUNDS BONELESS PORK SHOULDNER, CUT INTO 1-INCH PIECES
1/2 POUND PORK FAT BACK, CUT INTO ½-INCH PIECES
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 teaspoon dried oregano, (Mexican preferred)
1 teaspoon cayenne, or more to taste
1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
d tablespoon garlic, minced
1 tablespoon agave syrup, OR 1 teaspoon sugar
3 tablespoons white vinegar, OR more to taste

Preparation

Cooking Directions

1. Tear the chiles into large pieces and discard the seeds and stems. Toast in a small dry skillet over medium heat, stirring, for 1 or 2 minutes, or until the chiles start to darken and become aromatic. Take care not to burn them. Transfer to a small bowl, pour over boiling water to cover, and soak for at least 20 minutes, or until the chiles have softened.
2. Add the chiles to a blender with a few tablespoons of the soaking liquid and puree.
3. Add the cumin and coriander seeds to the skillet and toast over medium heat, shaking the pan, until the seeds become aromatic and just begin to smoke, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a mortar with a pestle or a spice grinder and grind to a powder. Set aside.
4. Using a meat grinder fitted with a ¼-inch plate, coarsely grind the pork and fatback into a large bowl or coarsely chop in batches in a food processor as directed in step 1 of Maple and Sage Pork Sausage Patties. Add the reserved chile puree, toasted spices, 4 tablespoons salt, 1½ teaspoons pepper, and the remaining ingredients, and using clean hands, knead and squeeze the mixture to blend thoroughly. Cook a small patty in a small skillet and taste for salt, pepper, cayenne, and vinegar; adjust as necessary. Refrigerate what you need immediately and freeze the rest in ½- to 1 pound amounts in zipper-lock freezer bags. The chorizo can be refrigerated for up to 2 days or frozen up to 3 months.
Menu Report

From white tablecloth restaurants to trendy food trucks, fresh sausage is sweeping the nation. Operators are offering fresh sausage at all day parts, from breakfast to lunch, to late-night snacking and everything in the middle.

Savvy operators are making fresh sausage back-of-house, allowing them the ability to develop flavors that compliment their specific menus and giving their patrons a unique dining experience.

Food Trucks with Fresh Sausage

Food trucks from coast to coast are serving up fresh made sausage with truly innovative ingredients and flavors. These flavors range from sweet to savory.

- Underdogs Gastro Truck, a food truck in San Diego, CA, has a wide variety of wacky and wonderful sausages. Their slogan is “stop by and get your sausage on!”
  - Johnny Appleseed – pork apple sausage topped with apple-sauce kraut served on French toast with powdered sugar and syrup
  - Banh Mi – garlic sausage sprinkled with pickled carrot and daikon, cilantro, and Dr. Pepper teriyaki sauce
  - Italian Stallion – sweet Italian sausage topped with sundried tomato pesto, provolone, pepperoncini, and tomato
  - The Beast – chorizo sausage with pastrami, Black Forest ham, lettuce, onion, tomato, cheese, and pepperoncini

- Corridor Sausage Co. was founded in 2009 by Zachary Klein and Will Branch to bring handcrafted and artisan meats to the Detroit market. In mid-2013, they launched a food truck called The Grindhouse, which sells their sausages which include:
  - Chorizo sausage made with pork, ancho and pasilla chilies, cinnamon, clove, garlic, oregano
  - Division Street Banger made with pork, fennel, orange, ginger, nutmeg
  - Green Curry and Pork Sausage made with house-made curry paste, coconut milk, and Thai basil
Pork, Sage and Pork Sausage made with dried apples, coriander, sage, maple
Fresh Herb Pork Breakfast Sausage made with garlic, ginger, sage, marjoram, maple

Pork, Pork and Nothing But Pork Sausages
Operators are focusing their attention to sausage made only from pork. Menus are offering their customers several options of pork-only sausages, combined with other flavorful ingredients, from cheese to spices.

- DBGB, the casual restaurant of famed chef Daniel Boulud, offers several pork only craft sausages:
  - Espagnole, a chorizo sausage with Basque peppers and basil oil
  - Thai-style, made with pork, lemongrass, and red curry with green papaya, basil-fried rice, chili sauce, and quail egg
  - The Beaujolaise, a sausage made with pork, mushroom, onions, bacon and red wine

- Linx Artisan Sausage, in Orange, CA, works directly with the craftsman at Europa Specialty Sausage to create all of their signature sausages. Linx’s offers three pork-only sausages that are steamed in beer, grilled, and served on guests’ choice of either a potato, poppy seed or pretzel roll:
  - Smoked Cheddar Bratwurst made with hickory smoked pork and aged Cheddar
  - Sicilian, a 250 year old recipe, made with spicy pork, aged provolone and basil
  - Spicy Polish Kielbasa, made with smoked spicy pork in a natural casing

- Brats Brothers, Gourmet Sausage Grill, with three locations in California, offers their avid customers multiple versions of all-pork brats served on french rolls:
  - Hungarian: spicy pork
  - Black Forest: smoked pork
  - Bavarian: beer infused smoked pork
  - The Big Cheese: Swiss cheese infused pork
  - The Other Big Cheese: Cheddar infused pork

European-style Restaurants Feature House-Made Sausage
European-style operations are incorporating old-school traditions of sausage making into their restaurants. This technique increases the authenticity of the dishes, as well as communicates to their patrons that the chef/owners care about their dining experience.

- Karl's Sausage Kitchen offers a wide range of European-style sausages, many of which are made by hand on location, in Peabody, MA. All of their products are produced the old fashioned way and are served with a choice potato salad, sauerkraut, potato pancakes, spätzle, or red cabbage
  - Kokkorv – a Swedish pork and potato sausage
Nürnberger – a mild pork sausage with salt and pepper

- Alla Spina, located in Philadelphia, PA, offers a Mortadella dog. The pork sausage is prepared traditionally with apples, pistachios, and spices, and then stuffed in a Sheep's milk casing. It's cooked on the griddle and nestled in a toasted bun topped with cabbage relish and spicy pickles.

- Marche Bistro, in Seattle, offers a housemade pork and pistachio sausage, served with charred squash, and sherry vinaigrette on their petite plates menu.

- Lecosho opened in downtown Seattle in September of 2010, with European-influenced dishes they are known around the city for their housemade sausage. They feature an entrée consisting of Grilled Housemade Sausage with lentils, braised greens and a soft boiled egg.

- The Wurst Bar in the Square, located in Cincinnati, OH, features several European-style sausages:
  - The Hans Gruber, a “Ruthless” German Brat with peppers, onions, and Vienna Dusseldorf mustard.

- The Portuguese Linguica – pork sausage topped with olive-roasted garlic tapenade and Dijon mustard.

**Epic Artisan Sausage**

Pork sausage is the perfect playground for playful and innovative toppings and flavors. Innovative operators are pairing pork sausage with ethnic flavors, over-the-top indulgent toppings and everything in between to create new meat masterpieces.

- Hot Doug’s, in Chicago, offers several ground-breaking pork sausages:
  - Truffle-Infused Pork Sausage with fresh herb mustard, double crème brie cheese and truffle oil.
  - Green Curry Pork Sausage with spicy peanut sauce, toasted coconut and fried rice sticks.
  - Pepperoni, Spinach and Mozzarella Pork Sausage with pesto aioli, slow roasted tomatoes and burrata cheese.

- Lucky Ducky Dogs, a food truck based in Dallas, TX, that has “fun with meat” features a sausage called “Gator Eats Pig” – made with alligator and pork sausage, and topped with strips of bacon, a fried egg, and drizzled with wasabi mayo and Sriracha sauce.

- The Black Pig, in Cleveland, OH, features a house sausage entrée made with pork, foie gras, barley, apple, and fennel.

- Linx Artisan Sausage, in Orange, CA, offers several out-of-this-world sausage combinations:
  - BBQ, Bacon and Blues Dog with a smoked Cheddar bratwurst, bacon marmalade, blue cheese, and mustard.
cheese-bacon aioli, honey mustard, honey barbecue sauce, crispy onions on a potato roll  
  o T.J. Street Dog made with a spicy polish sausage, Applewood smoked bacon, chorizo mayo, giardiniera relish, avocado, and cilantro on a potato roll

**Pork and Seafood Are Perfect Pairings For Sausage**

Land and sea are coming together in creative sausages, pairing pork with seafood ingredients, from shrimp to crawfish.

- Uber Sausage, with two locations in Denver, CO, features a sausage sandwich called The Cajun, made with a Cajun pork and crawfish sausage, topped with tomatoes, arugula, caramelized onions and remoulade sauce
- Hank’s Haute Dogs, in Hawaii, makes a dramatic twist on traditional sausage. They offer Lobster Sausage seared in butter, then wrapped in bacon and deep fried, and served topped with garlic-relish aioli, lettuce tomato and pickled takuan radish

**Chorizo Sausages Add an Authentic Flair**

Bold and spicy Hispanic foods and ingredients are appearing on all menus – from QSRs to high-end independents. Chefs are taking this trend and applying it to sausage with homemade chorizo sausage.

- Hot Doug’s, located in Chicago, features an extravagant chorizo sausage: Brandy-Infused Portuguese Chorizo with smoked paprika rouille and horseradish Havarti cheese
- Washington Place Bistro & Inn, located in Cleveland, OH, features homemade chorizo sausage in several of their items, from appetizers to breakfast dishes
  - P.E.I. Mussels served with housemade chorizo sausage, ginger, tarragon, and tomatoes in a carrot broth
  - Mack & Cheese made with artisanal cheeses and housemade chorizo served with a goat cheese strudel
- Biscuits & Grits feature low country cheesy grits, housemade chorizo sausage, and scallions, served with a beer blanc
- Eggs in the Nest with stone oven bakery challah, local eggs, housemade chorizo sausage and potato hash
- Uber Sausage, in Denver, CO, make their own chorizo sausage to serve on a dish called “The Mexico” made with Mexican chorizo sausage, black bean hummus, cilantro, mango pico de gallo, mixed red and green cabbage, avocado, queso fresco and crema fresco

**New Chain Menu Items**
• Dunkin' Donuts is testing new Dunkin' Dogs at select locations in the Chicago and Fort Myers, FL, markets. The dogs feature two cheesy Eckrich sausage links wrapped in slightly sweet baked dough. (7,306 units, HQ in Canton, MA)

• Cracker Barrel introduced a line of better-for-you items, including a spice-rubbed pork chop: a seared pork chop that has been rubbed with a seasoning that includes garlic and smoked paprika, and then topped with a Creole marmalade made with Dijon mustard and orange marmalade. (621 units, HQ in Lebanon, TN)

• Roy Rogers Restaurant announces new product innovations to wake up the taste buds. For a limited time, diners can sink their teeth into the new Chorizo Breakfast Wrap with the bold flavors of chorizo sausage, pico de gallo, and Monterey Jack cheese rolled up with scrambled eggs in a warm flour tortilla. (50 units, HQ in Frederick, MD)

• With the change of seasons comes the return of an original, made-from-scratch treat at Bojangles’ – the Smoked Sausage Biscuit. Beginning Monday, August 26 through Sunday, October 6 at participating locations, customers can enjoy the limited time offer for just 99 cents. The hickory-flavored biscuit features a smoked sausage slow cooked in natural spices, then split lengthwise, and served hot off the grill inside a Bojangles’ made-from-scratch buttermilk biscuit. (536 units, HQ in Charlotte, NC)

• Carrows Restaurants unveiled its limited-time menu. Offerings include: (64 units, HQ in Carlsbad, CA)
  o BBQ Platter—St. Louis-style barbecue ribs and grilled barbecue-glazed chicken breast
  o Mile High BBQ Pulled Pork Melt—pork and barbecue sauce piled on grilled sourdough bread with melted Jack cheese, red onions and crispy onion slivers
  o Mile High Pulled Pork Burger—burger patty topped with barbecue pulled pork on a warm bun with pickle chips, red onions, lettuce, tomatoes and mayonnaise

• Romano’s Macaroni Grill introduced Cremini Pork Shank in a Marsala wine sauce with caramelized onions, mushrooms and garlic-rosemary potatoes. (191 units, HQ in Dallas, TX)

• Hardee’s brought back Texas Toast Breakfast Sandwiches. The sandwich features egg, American cheese and a choice of sausage, bacon or ham between two slabs of grilled Texas toast. (1,703 units, HQ in St. Louis, MO)
• Corner Bakery Cafe brought back the seasonal BBLT sandwich. Available for a limited time, the sandwich comes with six thick slices of Applewood-smoked bacon, locally grown tomatoes, leaf lettuce and housemade cracked-pepper balsamic mayonnaise. (147 units, HQ in Dallas, TX)