

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NITRITES

By Nik Novak
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Confused about nitrites? Heard that bacon is bad for you recently?

Modern-day butchers use sodium nitrite or celery salt (which is about 50% nitrate and converts to nitrite) to “cure” or prevent bacterial growth in meat. Nitrite is not necessary, but, as it kills botulism, and as customers eat with their eyes, cured meat sells better when it is pink, not gray.

Either way, nitrites cure meat, despite USDA labeling. Example: Applegate's "uncured" bacon is, in fact, cured with celery salt. “Uncured” bacon is also salted and smoked. The purpose of smoke and salt? To cure meat. “Uncured” meat is, for the most part, a term used by marketers to sell the public on something it doesn't need. This shouldn't come as a surprise.

Sodium nitrite (also known as “pink salt” or “curing salt”), on the other hand, is a closely regulated substance; it is used in smaller quantities than its counterpart, celery salt, which is not regulated.

From a processing perspective: a nitrite is a nitrite. Nitrate kills botulism and makes your life better.

From a physiological perspective: a nitrite is also a nitrite. According to a recent issue of *Wise Traditions*, a publication of the Weston A. Price Foundation, all nitrites, regardless of source, affect human health similarly—which is to say very little, if at all. (Please read this article by Dr. Kaayla Daniel: <http://www.westonaprice.org/health-topics/save-your-bacon/>.)

People no longer cure meats like they used to. Just as the USDA does not allow farmers to process and sell their own meat, it is likewise illegal to rub a ham or a pork belly with salt and sugar and hang it from a barn rafter, as was common practice for more than a few years.

So go ahead, eat bacon every day. If this sounds boring, do what I do: eat sausage patties with your eggs once in a while. Pastured pork is rich in vitamins A and D, both of which reduce inflammation (the cause of all disease) and help build a strong body.

My suggestion, if folks are concerned: cure your own, or get some exercise and eat plenty of vegetables (though maybe less celery, as celery contains more nitrate than bacon!).

Processed foods comprising mainly of pesticide-laden monoculture grains, high fructose sugars, and vegetable oils are far more damaging to human health, and to the land, than is pastured pig meat with added nitrite.

When it comes to meat, the real concern is not nitrite but how an animal is raised. High forage diet, no antibiotics, and no hormones equals good. No soil, no sunshine, lots of grain and chemicals equals bad.

Just Local Food Cooperative sells clean, good-tasting pork. Special thanks to Jim and Alison at the Deutsch Family Farm, Steph and Andy Schneider at Together Farms, and Doug and Kathy Anderson of Beaver Creek Ranch!