

The
BUTCHER'S SALT





Tools

Equipment for the Artful Harvest of the Family Pig Addressing the Particulars of Slaughter, Butchery and Charcuterie

Cutlery

-More valuable than the knife is the ability to sharpen it. If you are going to spend money on cutlery, don't waste it on an expensive knife. First, purchase and watch the DVD "Blade Sharpening Fundamentals" by Murray Carter, found on our website under the store tab. This is the best one I have found. I do exactly as he says and never suffer with a dull knife. \$35

-King Japanese Water Stones are the stones used in the DVD and the ones that I use with great success. You can find them at cartercutlery.com. \$105

-When it comes time to purchase knives, my only criterion is that they be made with high-carbon steel instead of stainless steel. Fortunately, you will find most high-carbon cutlery at antique malls, garage sales and on Ebay. I rarely spend more than \$20 on a knife and routinely get the performance of a high-priced blade. The key is the sharpening DVD listed above.

-I find my cleavers in the same places. My requirement for a cleaver is that it be heavy, no lighter than 2.5lbs.

Slaughter Day

-First, you need a tree to hang the pigs from. Branches 5-6" in diameter will hold the pig just fine. The branches need to be 14' or higher from the ground to fit the scalding unit underneath the vertically hanging pig. It is not an option to use a forklift or bucket tractor. I have had one too many collapse on me. These do not reach the required height anyway.

-.22 wmr/*magnum* rifle. It is important for your rifle to be magnum to ensure a single shot kill. I prefer jacketed hollow points or full metal jacket rounds made from copper instead of lead. These can be hard to find online due to frequent runs on stock and subsequent shortages, so start your search early. I have had success with Cabela's.

-Jet propane burner. This is your only option for heating up scalding water quickly and under control. It must be capable of supporting the weight of a 55gal. drum of water. A standard camp burner will not be quick enough for your needs. Get the Bayou Classic Double Jet Cooker at BayouClassicStore.com. \$68.95

-55 gallon metal drum. This is your scalding tank for dunking the pig carcasses, half the body at a time. I found ours on Craigslist for \$50 and cut the top out with a metal saw, making a big, pig-sized aluminum-can-looking tank.

-5 gallon propane tank. You can scald 4 pigs on one 5 gallon tank. Any hardware store will have these for \$40 or so.

-2-4 bell scrapers. Otherwise known as hogscrapers, they are not surprisingly the only tool for scraping hair and scurf off the pig once it's been scalded. You'll need at least two; three is better, four is optimal, five gets crowded and dangerous. Once in a while they do get dropped into the tank of water before you are done scraping so that's why its good to have at least one more than you really need on hand. I go to Butcher-Packer.com and get their Bell Hog Scraper under Processing Supplies; Tools, Sealers and Wrappers. \$27.45

-Chain hoist: This enables controlled lifting of the pig into and out of the scalding tank. A 16' chain is the most versatile, but if it drags on the ground, it will drip mud on the pig as you hoist, necessitating constant washing with the hose. Though a 12' chain will work, it limits you to branches or barn beams that are no more than 14' off the ground. Get what works best with your beam/branch height. I prefer the 1-ton chain hoist at HarborFreight.com for \$49.99. You can also rent one at most Home Depot-type stores for \$15 if you prefer.

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-Wire rope/Cable sling: This is how you tie the chain hoist to the branch or beam. We got a 3/8 in. x 9 ft. Galvanized Cable Sling with Loops at Home Depot for \$18.68

-Gambrel: Look no further than Meathookus.com. Their Super Duty Hog or Beef Gambrel is what you want. I use their beef gambrel for pigs and even lambs. The circular ends make so much sense...it's surprising that I've only found one company that makes gambrels this way.

-‘S’ Hook for hanging the pig from one trotter during scalding. 2 are convenient. Look also at Meathookus.com. You need the 1/2”x 8-9” hook. This company is small batch, so call for pricing.

-Hog toenail puller: This does one thing very well. We've tried many other hooks and they simply bend and break. This is the one. Go to Bunzlpd.com; Processing; Hand tools and twine, then you'll see the two-pronged toenail puller.

\$42.95. Seriously worth it to the serious pig harvester.

-Bone saw: Splitting a pig is no easy task. Don't waste time with a hacksaw or make a mess with a sawzall. You will use it on butchery day too. Get this at the same place as the toenail puller: Bunzlpd.com; Processing; Handsaws; the 20” Packer saw is the one you want. Anything bigger compromises blade stability. \$69.95

-2-3 tables: This is for laying out tools, knives, stones (for sharpening knives) and any snacks you want with you.

-Hose. You need good water pressure that will reach your hanging tree. A spray nozzle is indispensable.

Butchery/Charcuterie Day

-Bus tubs: Food safe containers that are essential while carving and sorting cuts from a pig. You'll need 5 or 6, though you can't have too many. You can get these at any restaurant supply store, like Cash n' Carry, or even online. The deeper 6-8 inch tubs are best for curing the 4 sides of belly from 2 pigs; they can all stack in one tub to accommodate your bacon efficiently. \$4-\$14ea

-Cutting boards: Pig harvesting is demanding so aim for the biggest and thickest cutting boards. We like wood best; they are kinder to our knives and clean better. You will need at least four. Large, cheap plastic ones at restaurant supply stores work too if you're on a budget.

-Large sturdy workhorse table. A stainless steel table is best. This will have to hold an entire half carcass, up to 150 pounds.

-Butcher paper (18" in width) and Reynolds Foodservice Film (also as wide as you can get; 18" minimum, 24" is better). These can be found at restaurant supply stores as well. \$20-\$30/roll.

-Sturdy tape dispenser with masking tape and permanent markers for labeling. Get a few markers; they wander.

-Sausage:

- Stuffer: Any of the stuffers on SausageMaker.com. I started with a 5 lb. hand-crank, and then moved up to a 15 lb. hand-crank, and this works fine for our volume.
- Grinder: If you want to make your own sausage you absolutely must get an electric grinder. I've messed around with hand-grinders and they only make your head explode with frustration. Four years ago I got the Torrey (now Pro-Cut) KG-12W-FS Meat Grinder. Find it easily at PleasantHillGrain.com under Meat Grinders; Pro-Cut Meat Grinders; Pro-Cut M-12 Meat Grinders. It has been going strong for me all this time. It grinds all meats and fats with ease.
- Casings: You can harvest your own, but sometimes it is important to pick your battles. You can get enough for 100 lbs. of sausage (standard size) for \$16.33 at Butcher-Packer.com, under Sausage Casings; Natural Casings; Hog Casings; 35/38mm size.
- Sausage pricker: This is a three pronged tool for delicate pricking of stuffed sausage to release air in the links, preventing bursting later during cooking. SausageMaker.com. \$8.99

-Cambros: Square or circular clear food safe containers for your ham brines. Get the 18 quart size or larger. Usually two will fit the hams, hocks and trotters of two pigs. You'll need the lids, as well as two dinner plates and 2 quart-sized mason jars (filled with water and lidded) to be your weights, keeping the meat submerged under the brine. Get these also at a restaurant supply store. In a pinch you can also use brand new 5 gallon buckets for the same purpose.

-Ingredients for most often made items in our classes:

- Dry Cures: If you want bacon, guanciale and/or prosciutto from 1-2 pigs, make sure you've got at least 10-30 lbs course sea salt on hand.
- Wet Cures: If you want to brine hams, hocks and trotters, make sure you've got 5 pounds each of fine sea salt and unrefined sugar.
- Rillettes: you just need mason jars with lids and some salt on hand to taste.
- Blood Sausage: back-fat and blood from the pig, 5-6 apples, 4-5 onions, 2 cups heavy whipping cream, butter, some fruit jam for serving with.
- Pâté Terrine: caul fat, liver and ground pork from the pig, pistachios, brandy. Also have some loaf pans for cooking them in and a large casserole dish or deeper for cooking them in as a bain marie.

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- Sausage: wine, fennel, garlic, chili flakes, oregano, sage, maple syrup, apples, ginger. These ingredients will give you quite a few varieties.
Get whatever your palate leads you to here.

Good luck, and keep in touch with your questions. The prices sited here may be subject to change, but not disproportionately. Please let us know if the websites referenced expire and you're at a loss for finding any of the specialty items.

Many thanks for making us part of your harvest,
Brandon Sheard



The Butcher's Salt

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