

Serving Ham Safely

If you've been shopping for ham recently, you may have found yourself bewildered by the many choices available: fresh, cured, cooked, spiral-cut, smoked, bone in, boneless, country. It's no wonder people have so many questions about cooking and storing ham! Here are some tips that will make it easier for you to prepare ham successfully – and safely.



Types of Ham

Simply, ham is a leg of pork. If it's made from the shoulder, it's called a picnic. Types of ham are fresh, cook-before-eating, cooked, or country (dried and shelf stable).

Hams are either ready to eat or not. Hams that must be cooked before eating will have cooking instructions and safe handling instructions on the label.

Cooking and Reheating Ham

One of the most frequently requested items this time of year is our [Ham Cooking Chart](#). This chart helps you determine how many minutes of cooking are required, based on the ham's type and weight.

Fresh and cook-before-eating hams must reach 160 °F as measured with a food thermometer to be safely cooked. Cook in an oven set no lower than 325 °F. Hams can also be safely cooked in a microwave oven, in other countertop appliances, and on the stove.

Ready-to-eat hams include spiral-cut ham, boneless or bone-in hams (whole, halves or portions), and dried ham such as prosciutto. These can be eaten cold right out of the package. If you want to reheat these cooked hams, set the oven no lower than 325°F and heat to an internal temperature of 140°F.

Spiral-cut hams, which are fully cooked, are best served cold because heating sliced hams can dry out the meat and cause the glaze to melt. If reheating is desired, heat to 140 °F (165 °F for leftover spiral-cut hams or ham that has been repackaged in any other location outside the plant). To reheat a spiral-sliced ham in a conventional oven, cover the entire ham or portion with heavy aluminum foil and heat at 325 °F for about 10 minutes per pound. Individual slices may also be warmed in a skillet or microwave.

Country hams, which have been dried and are safe stored at room temperature, can be soaked 4 to 12 hours or longer in the refrigerator to reduce the salt content before cooking. Then they can be cooked by boiling or baking. Follow the manufacturer's cooking instructions.

Storing Ham

Many people believe that because most hams are cured that they are safe longer than fresh meat. However, most leftover cooked ham is safe in the refrigerator only about 5 days.

Ham Cooking Chart

Category	Cut	Weight in Pounds	Minutes Per Pound
Smoked ham, cook-before-eating	Whole, bone in	10 to 14	18 to 20
	Half, bone in	5 to 7	22 to 25
	Shank or butt portion, bone in	3 to 4	3 to 4
	Arm picnic shoulder, boneless	5 to 8	30 to 35
	Shoulder roll (butt), boneless	2 to 4	35 to 40
Smoked ham, cooked	Whole, bone in	10 to 14	15 to 18
	Half, bone in	5 to 7	18 to 24
	Arm picnic shoulder, boneless	5 to 8	25 to 30
	Canned ham, boneless	3 to 10	15 to 20
	Vacuum packed, boneless	6 to 12	10 to 15
	Spiral cut, whole or half	7 to 9	10 to 18
Fresh ham, uncooked	Whole leg, bone in	12 to 16	22 to 26
	Whole leg, boneless	10 to 14	24 to 28
	Half, bone in	5 to 8	35 to 40

❖ **For country ham** (dried, whole or half):

1. Soak 4 to 12 hours in refrigerator.
2. Cover with water, then boil 20 to 25 minutes per pound.
3. Drain, glaze, and brown at 400 °F for 15 minutes.