



## THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBLES

A FOOD BLOG

### **Corned Beef** (adapted from Alton Brown)

6 to 8 servings

There are a lot of notes here, but you don't have to read them if you don't want to. They're just explaining why I changed what I did from Alton's recipe. If you just follow the recipe, you'll make some fantastic corned beef.

When I got to the part of this entry where I said "my brine was far more concentrated", I finally realized that leaving out the ice and therefore decreasing the overall water in the brine means that all of the seasonings, not just the salt, were too concentrated, which means I should have decreased the rest of the ingredients too. That would explain the strong smell of cinnamon while the beef was boiling, so now I've decreased the warm spices by half as well. My beef was probably a little more sweet than most, but I liked it, so I've decreased the sugar some, but not by the full half.

The idea of adding ice is to cool the mixture quickly. I still like that idea (although I wasn't in a hurry, so I let the liquid cool to room temperature, then put it in the fridge overnight before starting to brine the beef), so instead of leaving the ice out, I've reduced the water used to dissolve the salt and sugar.

The use of saltpeter (potassium nitrate) is up to you. Its purpose is to make the meat pink; without it, it turns the purpley gray that you see in my pictures. Cooks Illustrated's corned beef write-up reported chemical flavors whenever they used saltpeter, and I couldn't find it anyway (I can't even find mini-cupcake liners, much less saltpeter!), so I left it out, and truthfully, I quite like the color of the meat at the end of cooking.

4 cups water  
½ cup kosher salt  
6 tablespoons brown sugar  
1 tablespoon saltpeter (optional)  
½ cinnamon stick, broken into several pieces  
1 teaspoon mustard seeds  
1 teaspoon black peppercorns  
4 whole cloves  
4 whole allspice berries  
6 whole juniper berries  
2 bay leaves, crumbled  
¼ teaspoon ground ginger  
2 pounds water  
1 (4 to 5 pound) beef brisket, trimmed

Place the water in a 5-quart pot along with the salt, sugar, saltpeter (if using), and spices. Cook over high heat until the salt and sugar have dissolved. Add the ice and let set the mixture until the ice is mostly melted. Once the liquid is cold, place the brisket in a 1-gallon zip-top bag and add the brine. Seal and lay flat inside a 9x13-inch pan. Refrigerate for 5 days, turning occasionally. After 5 days, remove the meat from the brine and rinse it under cool water. Cook using your favorite recipe. (I like to keep it very simple, just simmering the brisket in water for a few hours until it's tender, adding potatoes, carrots and cabbage right at the end.)