

Country Ham Speech Topic for Juniors (Born 2015-2011)

Speech Day at the State Fair is on Thursday, August 14, 2025.

Speech Topic for Juniors- Steps to Curing a Country Ham.

Outline, discuss, and describe the steps you took to cure your ham for this year's country ham project.

Speech must be 3-5 minutes long.

You may use notecards. You can also use electronic devices, such as phones or iPads, instead of notecards.

No visual aids are allowed for this speech topic.

HOW TO CURE A COUNTRY HAM -COUNTRY HAM INSERVICE-

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Kentucky Country Ham Producers



HISTORY OF COUNTRY HAM

- **A throwback to the way meat was preserved**
- **Refrigeration is only 100ish years old**
- **Techniques from Europe**
 - **Prosciutto, Black Forest Ham, Iberian Ham, Serrano Hams, etc**
- **Very difficult for people to get their minds around**
- **A perishable meat product rubbed with salt and aged when days hit 90°F or higher**
- **And I can still eat it!**



GETTING STARTED

- **Green Ham**
 - **Uncured, fresh, hind leg of a pig**
- **The closer to the time of harvest the better**
 - **Ideally within 48 hours**
- **But...can be done with older hams**
- **Skin still need to be soft**



**If you have a
bunch of kids you
will get one of
these!! A Combo**



**This weighs
more that
2,000lbs**

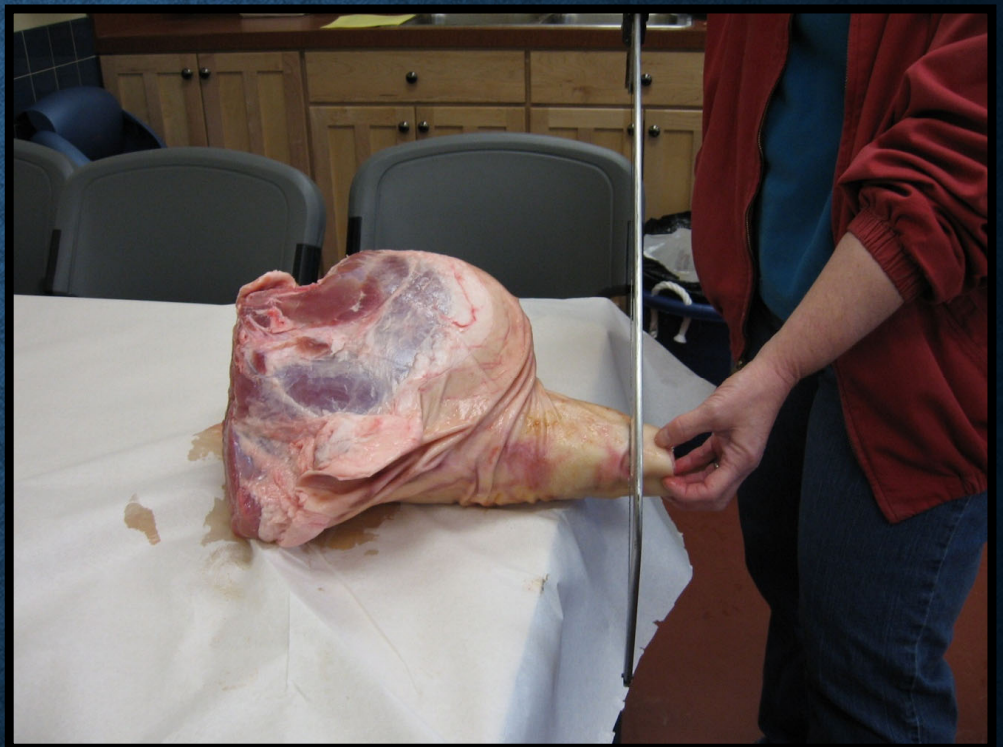
GETTING STARTED

- **Need:**
 - **Ham (Green Ham)**
 - **Cure**
 - **Saw**
 - **Waxless paper**
 - **Ham Sock**
- **Cure (100lbs of Ham)**
 - **8# salt, 2# Brown Sugar, Black Pepper, Red Pepper**



THE GREEN HAM

- **Long hocks**
 - 2" from heel
- **May need to trim loose fat and muscle**
 - **Be Careful**
 - **Remember this ham will shrink by a 1/3 of its original size**



CURE MIX + GREEN HAM = X

- Fairly simple part of the process
- 2 ½ to 2 ¾ lbs cure per ham
 - May have to calculate amount needed
- Get plenty of cure in the hock
 - Bone Sour
- Rub the cure all over the ham



WRAPPING THE HAM



Ready to wrap

Turn paper to where it appears like a diamond in front of you, fold the corner over the hock, then fold one side over, then fold the top, followed by the folding the other side.



THE PAPER AND HANGING

- **Paper has to be waxless**
 - **Water needs to escape and the ham needs to breath**
- **Hang hams hock down**
 - **Tear drop shape**
- **Socks will stretch**



TWO WAYS OF CURING HAMS

- **Two ways to cure hams**
- **Bag Cure**
 - Cure rubbed on hams then wrapped in paper
- **Saltbox Cure**
 - Submerge ham in cure or cover ham with cure, then add more cure a few weeks later





WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THE HAM

- **Salt and sugar will penetrate the ham**
- **Peppers will stay on the surface**
- **Bag method, 2 days/lb of ham**
- **Saltbox Method, 1"/week**
- **This is called the Curing Process**



WHAT YOU WILL SEE

- **Muscle = 70% to 75% water**
- **Water will purge from the hams**
- **Paper and Sock will get wet**
- **Floor will get wet**
- **Hams will lose weight**
- **Dry toward the end of the process**





AIR FLOW

- **Air flow is key to the production of a quality country ham**
- **Air flow helps:**
 - **Outside color**
 - **Drying**
 - **Mold growth**
- **Spring, after the atmosphere has dried, off at night**







SPRING OR SALT EQUALIZATION

- **Cured ham**
- **Salt Equalization**
 - **Gradual warming of the ham and weather**
 - **Helps to evenly distribute the salt throughout the ham**
- **Time to “Shuck” the ham!!**



THE SUMMER SWEAT AKA AGING

- **Re-socked**
- **Spring into Summer**
- **Develops the characteristic Country Ham flavor and aroma**
- **The longer a ham is aged:**
 - **The stronger the flavor**
 - **The salt concentration increases**
 - **More moisture is lost**



WHAT TO EXPECT OR WHAT CAN HAPPEN!!

- Floors will become messy!
- Mold will grow on the hams
 - Harmless mold
- The aroma will attract rodents, wild animals, and bugs!!



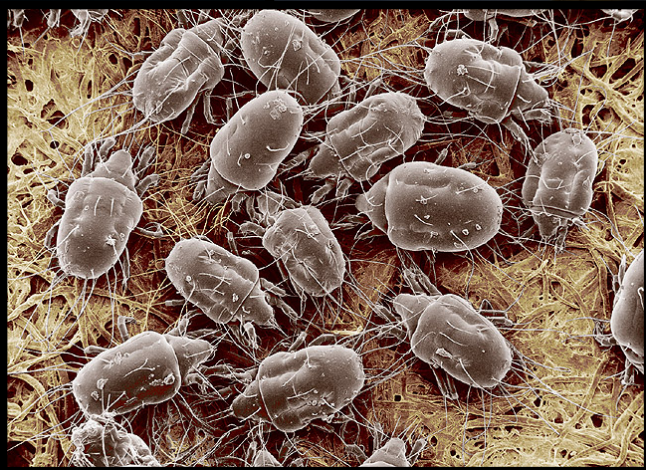
MOLD GROWTH



BUG DAMAGE – LARDER BEETLE



BUG DAMAGE – HAM MITES



CHEESE SKIPPERS AND RED- LEGGED HAM BEETLES



THE END OF THE ROAD, THE STATE FAIR

- **August**
- **Time to get the hams ready for the big day**
- **Clean, clean, and then clean some more**
- **Dry**
- **Small amount of oil**

