**Notes and Observations on Glen’s Experimentation with Home-Made Charcuterie**

Sadly, it did not occur to me to keep these sort of notes until I had completed several recipes, some of which I don’t recall in detail. But, in an attempt to learn something from the past, here are some notes, critiques, and comments on my humble efforts:

***CHAPTER 1: BACON***

**Bacon, 2013.** I followed the basic recipe in Ruhlman and Polcyn’s book (Charcuterie---The Craft of Salting, Smoking, and Curing). I smoked it on my weber kettle smoker at about 250 degrees until the bacon reached an internal temperature of 150 degrees. I used pork belly and cured it for seven days. Flavor was mild, but good. Not too salty. The pork belly didn’t really pick up any smoke flavor. *Lessons I took away from this attempt:* Fresh pork belly was hard to find, and I wound up with a very fatty piece. I wanted something leaner. Also, I was convinced that I couldn’t get a steady, low-enough temperature to get a good smoke flavor.

**Maple-Cured Smoked Bacon (Buck Board Bacon), August 2014.**  I followed Ruhlman and Polcyn’s recipe (p. 83) but used untrimmed pork shoulder roast instead of pork belly (I requested a 5 lb untrimmed pork shoulder roast from the market, thinking it would have a higher fat content). I removed the bone from the center of the roast and cut the roast in-half lengthwise to get two, similarly thick, pieces. I brined for seven days, and rinsed and let a pellicle form in the fridge overnight. I then smoked it at 200 degrees targeting an internal temp of 150 degrees. I understood this would take about 3 hours. After one hour, I noticed the internal meat temp was rising rather fast, so lowered the temperature of the smoker to about 150 for an hour…the internal smoker temp eventually dropped to about 160 by the end of the hour. After 2 hours total, I turned the smoker back up to 200 degrees and removed when bacon reached 150 (about 4 hours total). I used mostly apple wood, but about 25% hickory, as well. I also didn’t put water in the bowl below the wood bisquette burner in the smoker, and occasionally advanced a burning bisquette into the bowl, so that a new one starting smoking while the other was still smoking. This technique, intended to add more smoke flavor, seemed to work well. End product turned out very nice, although a bit on the salty side. These made superb BLTs! *Lessons I learned from this attempt:* I really liked using pork shoulder instead of pork belly. With the exception of a little too much salt, the flavor was superb. Next time I will see if it seems cured in less time than seven days and or will consider soaking the cured pieces in cold water over night (before forming the pellicle) to reduce saltiness. Consider starting recipe a full 10 days from when I want to consume.

**Maple-Cured Smoked Bacon (Buck Board Bacon) Version 3.0, January 2015.**  I followed Ruhlman and Polcyn’s recipe (p. 83) but used untrimmed pork shoulder roast instead of pork belly. I cut the 5.5lb roast in-half lengthwise to get two, similarly thick, pieces. I brined for seven days (plus about 4 hours), rinsed and soaked in cold fresh water for 2 hours (to reduce saltiness), then let a pellicle form in the fridge overnight. I then smoked it at:

1. 60 degrees (Smoker on, but oven off) for 30 mins (just to ensure a good pellicle).
2. 120 degrees for about 3 hours.
3. 160 degrees for about one half hour (then I noticed the internal temperature was rising VERY slowly)
4. 200 degrees for about 1 hour.

Total smoking time was about 5 hours. I used mostly apple wood, but about 25% hickory, as well. I also didn’t put water in the bowl below the wood bisquette burner in the smoker, and occasionally advanced a burning bisquette into the bowl, so that a new one started smoking while the other was still smoking. This technique, intended to add more smoke flavor, seemed to work well. End product turned out very nice, although a bit on the smoky side. *Lessons I learned from this attempt:* As before, I really liked using pork shoulder instead of pork belly. Soaking in fresh water following the cure seemed to help with reducing saltiness. This was the best batch yet. My one critique was that the smoke flavor was a bit strong. Next time, I will adjust the temperature protocol to 120 degrees for 3 hours and 200 for 1 hour (targeting 4 hours total instead of 5).

**Maple-Cured Smoked Bacon (Buck Board Bacon) Version 4.0, August 2015.**  I followed Ruhlman and Polcyn’s recipe (p. 83) but used untrimmed pork shoulder roast instead of pork belly. I made a double batch using one 7 lb pork roast and one 6 lb pork roast. (I adjusted the cures proportionally to the weight). I cut the roasts in-half lengthwise to get two, similarly thick, pieces. I brined for eight days (a day longer than normal to accommodate the thicker roasts), rinsed and soaked in cold fresh water for 2 hours (to reduce saltiness), then let a pellicle form in the fridge overnight. I then smoked it using a PID controller at:

1. 120 degrees (C1) for 4 hours (T1).
2. 160 degrees (C2) for about 3 hours (T2).
3. 200 degrees (C3) for about 2 hours (until an internal temp of 150 degrees).

Total smoking time was about 8 hours (I ignored my previous comment that the bacon was too smokey…once it was frozen it did not retain too smokey of a flavor). I used mostly apple wood, but about 25% hickory, as well. I also didn’t put water in the bowl below the wood bisquette burner in the smoker, and occasionally advanced a burning bisquette into the bowl, so that a new one started smoking while the other was still smoking. This technique, intended to add more smoke flavor, seemed to work well. End product turned out very nice, although a bit on the smoky side. *Lessons I learned from this attempt:* As before, I really liked using pork shoulder instead of pork belly. Soaking in fresh water following the cure seemed to help with reducing saltiness. This was the best batch yet. Very good.

**Maple-Cured Smoked Bacon (Buck Board Bacon) Version 5.0, August 2016.**  Repeated previous recipe (version 4.0). Turned out great.

**Maple-Cured Smoked Bacon (Buck Board Bacon) Version 6.0, April 2017, and September 2017.**  Repeated Version 4.0 recipe, although half of the double batch was made with “boneless pork spare ribs,” which were a little over a pound each. Seems like they are a good size for freezing, and requires less meat prep. *Lessons I took away from this attempt:* Boneless spare ribs worked great. Flavor was comparable to the whole, butterflied pork shoulder roast. Will do again.

***CHAPTER 2: CORNED BEEF***

**Corned Beef, early 2014.** Once again, I followed the recipe in Ruhlman and Polcyn. I used two whole tri-tips (about 2.5 lbs each) instead of brisket. Brined for 5 days. Meat had a beautiful color, but was very salty. *Lessons I took away from this attempt:* Ideas to reduce salt flavor: 1) reduce amount of kosher salt in brine, 2) brine for less time, and/or 3) after brining, soak in cold water over night.

***CHAPTER 3: HAM***

**Hot-Smoked Duck Ham, December 2016.** [Again, ]I followed the recipe in Ruhlman and Polcyn, pages 82-83. I used four boneless duck breasts purchased frozen and thawed in the fridge. There was a small note on the package that said the duck breasts may contain up to a 5 percent brine solution, which made me nervous that I may over-brine them. The net weight of each duck breast seemed to be roughly one-half of the size referenced in the recipe. Due to the smaller size and the brining note, I chose to brine them on the low end of the recommended times (8 hours). I followed the brine recipe exactly. Due to concerns about the duck breasts cooking too fast (from their small size), I smoked them at 120 degrees (C1) for 90 minutes (T1), then upped the temperature to 180 degrees (C2) until the internal temp reached 160 degrees. My plan was to target a smoking time of 2.5 hours total. *Lessons I took away from this attempt:* End product was pretty good. I really didn’t have any pre-conceived expectations. Nice moisture content and beautiful color. If you slice it very thin, as recommended, it is quite nice. If you slice it a little thicker, it is a little more salty (but not a lot) than I would prefer and a little more smokey. As they suggested in the book, I think it would be a fine addition to a charcuterie plate, or thinly sliced on a salad. In terms of the smoke, contrary to my attempt at a 2.5 hour smoking time, it took me 4.5 hours to bring the duck breast up to temperature using the technique described above! I used half apple wood and half hickory. Ideas for next time: 1) find duck breasts that were not previously brined, 2) start smoking the duck breasts at 180 degrees to encourage a shorter smoking time (targeting 2.5 hours). I will also freeze some to determine how well that works with this product.

**Tasso Ham, January, 2017.** [Again, ]I mostly followed the recipe in Ruhlman and Polcyn, pages 86-86, although I modified the spice rub as indicated below (based on reviewing a separate recipe on mynolacuisine.com). I bought a 5 lb boneless pork shoulder and cut it into 5 equally(ish)-sized pieces. Then I heavily coated each piece on all sides with a Basic Dry Cure, and let sit covered in the fridge for 4 hours. Rinsed-off the basic dry cure in cold water, and dried each steak with a paper towel. Then, I applied an even layer of a spice rub, placed the pieces on a rack, and refrigerated, uncovered, overnight. The spice rub I would up using for 5 lbs of tasso was:

2 tsp Cayenne Pepper

2 Tblsp White Pepper

3 Tblsp Dried Marjoram

3 Tblsp Ground Allspice\*

\*I am very nervous about using this much allspice…hoping that the product is edible. We’ll see.

 I smoked them at 150 degrees (C1) for 120 minutes (T1), then upped the temperature to 180 degrees (C2) for about 120 minutes until the internal temp reached 150 degrees. I used about 1/3 pecan-wood and 2/3 oak. My plan was to target a smoking time of 4 hours total. *Lessons I took away from this attempt:* End product was pretty good, although it took closer to 6 hours to cook the thickest piece. The amount of pepper and marjoram was good. I think I’d back off on the amount of allspice—it wasn’t overpowering, but think it would be better with less. Next time, I’ll look up other spices, perhaps more-andouille-like spices? Also, I’ll up the temperatures to 160 degrees for 2 hours and then 200 degrees for 2 hours. Worthy of doing again.

**Tasso Ham, version 2.0, December, 2017.** Despite my review and thoughts on how to change things from version 1, I found I enjoyed the dishes that I put the tasso in. Hence, I am opting to mostly repeat version 1, with the exception of a higher cooking time in order to get a finished product with about 4 hours of smoke. As before, I mostly followed the recipe in Ruhlman and Polcyn, pages 86-86. I bought two 4.5 lb boneless pork shoulders and cut each into 4 equally(ish)-sized pieces. Each steak was fairly thick (over an inch thick). Then I heavily coated each piece on all sides with a Basic Dry Cure, and let sit covered in the fridge for 4 hours. Rinsed-off the basic dry cure in cold water, and dried each steak with a paper towel. Then, I applied an even layer of a spice rub, placed the pieces on a rack, and refrigerated, uncovered, overnight. The spice rub I wound up using for 5 lbs (which I doubled) of tasso was:

2 tsp Cayenne Pepper

2 Tblsp White Pepper

3 Tblsp Dried Marjoram

3 Tblsp Ground Allspice

I did not apply all of the spice mix, but, rather, provided a medium coating on all of the steaks (I discarded the rest). I smoked them at 160 degrees (C1) for 120 minutes (T1), then upped the temperature to 200 degrees (C2) for about 120 minutes until the internal temp reached 150 degrees. I used about 1/2 pecan-wood and 1/2 oak. My plan was to target a smoking time of 4 hours total. *Lessons I took away from this attempt:* End product was pretty good, and it was finished in almost exactly 4 hours. I sampled a thin piece of the finished product, while I was vacuum packing. I don’t really know what it is supposed to taste like on its own. Spices were prominent, but the pepper wasn’t overpowering. Smoke flavor was present but not dominant. The thin-piece was very salty (assume the thicker parts of the steaks are less salty). Kinda made me think of a spicy salt pork. I’ll defer judgement (again) until I try in in a dish (like a jambalaya or shrimp and grits).

***CHAPTER 4: SAUSAGE***

**Andouille--**

**Andouille Sausage, August 2014.** Followed Ruhlman and Polcyn’s Smoke Andouille recipe. Ground sausage with Kitchenaid grinder and stuffed into pork casings using Kitchenaid sausage stuffer. Let form pellicle overnight in fridge. Smoked for about 5 hours using pecan wood until an internal temp of 150 was reached. Sausages had a very nice flavor and texture. *Lessons I learned from this attempt:*  Everything was great, but I found myself wanting a little more flavor in the sausage. Next time, will consider swapping out the minced onion for garlic and perhaps adding a little more cayenne. I made a full 5 lb recipe and found that it seemed pretty hard on the kitchenaid, particularly the stuffing part. Also, I found that I stuffed the sausage a bit too tight, making them hard to twist into links afterwards (one or two busted while I was twisting).

**Andouille Sausage 2.0, December 2014.** Last time (the first time) I made Andouille, I found myself wanting a little more flavor. I also found that the Kitchenaid sausage-stuffing adaptor didn’t work all that well (seemed like it was pretty hard on the mixer. I also found the texture of the sausage to be a little more “refined” than I wanted (I used the fine sieve).

So, this time I got better equipment: 1) An electric meat grinder (STX TurboForce Series 3000), and 2) a LEM manual sausage stuffer. I also purchased “pre-tubed” hog casings, hoping to make the stuffing part a little easier.

I also changed the recipe. I mostly followed the Ruhlman and Polcyn “Cold-Smoked Andouille” recipe (even though I will Hot-Smoke it), with some modifications from the internet (mainly from nolacuisine.com).

Here is the recipe:

5 lbs Boneless Pork Shoulder

2.5 cups diced sweet Onion

¼ Cup Minced Garlic

2 tsp Cayenne Pepper

1 tsp Red Pepper flakes

1 Tblsp Black pepper

40 grams Kosher salt

6 grams Pink salt

½ tsp dried Thyme

¾ tsp ground mace

1/8 tsp ground cloves

¾ tsp ground allspice

¾ tsp ground marjoram

½ cup dried non-fat milk

½ cup cold water

I divided the unground mixture in half and ground the first half with a coarse sieve, and the second half with a “chunk” sieve. Then I combined both halves with the powdered milk and ice water. I had to delay stuffing the sausage (was planning to do it on day two) because I didn’t realize that I needed to pre-soak the pre-tubed casings for 24 hours. So, on day 3 I stuffed the sausages, and let them form a pellicle in the fridge for about 4 hours. The electric meat grinder works incredibly well. The stuffer also worked well. The pre-tubed casings seemed to also work well (note that I only used about half of one pre-tubed casing to stuff about 6 lbs of sausage…I assume that a tube would stuff somewhere in the neighborhood of 10 lbs).

Smoked sausages for about 5 hours with pecan wood. I had a hard time keeping the smoker at a good temperature. When I set it for 120 degrees, it would cycle up to 138 degrees before turning off and cooling back down. If I turned off the oven element, temperatures dropped into the 70 degree range (which I thought was too low). I finished them in the smoker by raising the temp to 170 and waiting for an internal temp of 150. End product turned out well. Flavor was much more like what I was hoping for, but still not too spicy to eat on its own. The diced onion still has a small amount of “crunch” in the end product. Lessons learned from this attempt: The recipe is great with the exception of crunchy onions. Next time, I will consider either cooking and cooling the onion, in advance, or omitting the onion. I’m still a little puzzled regarding smoking technique…I will either smoke it for a considerable time with the oven element off, or consider investing in a PID (a meter that hooks up to the Bradley and controls the temperature much more precisely).

**Andouille Sausage 3.0, July 2015.** I made some slight modifications to the recipe from last time. I still mostly followed the Ruhlman and Polcyn “Cold-Smoked Andouille” recipe (even though I will Hot-Smoke it), with some modifications from the internet (mainly from nolacuisine.com). Since last time, I decided to soften the diced onion in olive oil (and cool), use ¼ cup of roasted garlic, and 1 Tblsp of minced raw garlic.

Here is the recipe:

5 lbs Boneless Pork Shoulder

2.0 cups diced sweet Onion (softened until translucent in olive oil & allowed to cool)

¼ Cup Roasted Garlic

1 Tblsp Garlic, minced

2 tsp Cayenne Pepper

1 tsp Red Pepper flakes

1 Tblsp Black pepper

40 grams Kosher salt

6 grams Pink salt

½ tsp dried Thyme

¾ tsp ground mace

1/8 tsp ground cloves

¾ tsp ground allspice

¾ tsp ground marjoram

½ cup dried non-fat milk

½ cup cold water

I divided the unground mixture in half and ground the first half with a coarse sieve, and the second half with a “chunk” sieve. Then I combined both halves with the powdered milk and ice water. I stuffed the sausages, and let them form a pellicle in the fridge overnight. The electric meat grinder works incredibly well. The stuffer also worked well. The pre-tubed casings seemed to also work well…this time I remembered to soak them for 24+ hours in advance (I found out that one “tube” stuffed approximately 8 lbs of sausage).

Smoked sausages for about 6 hours with pecan & apple wood (50:50). This time I used a PID with the following stettings:

100 degrees (C1) for 1 hour (T1)

120 degrees (C2) for 2 hours (T2)

130 degrees (C3) for 1 hour (T3)

140 degrees (C4) for 1 hour (T4)

170 degrees (C5) for 2 hours (T5) –until internal temp reaches 150

End product turned out well. Flavor was much more like what I was hoping for, but still not too spicy to eat on its own. The cooked onion and roasted garlic added a nice depth. Best batch yet. *What I learned from this attempt:* The PID controller really worked well. The sausages had a very nice flavor, including the smoke. No major changes needed. Oak smoke instead of apple?...maybe? Next time, make 10 lbs! (a double batch)…it probably takes about 30 minutes more than a single batch, and you won’t run-out so fast.

**Andouille Sausage 4.0, Sept 2015.** I made some slight modifications to the recipe from last time (again). I still mostly followed the Ruhlman and Polcyn “Cold-Smoked Andouille” recipe (even though I will Hot-Smoke it), with some modifications from the internet (mainly from nolacuisine.com). This time, I’m making a double batch (10 lbs). Since last time, I decided to double the minced raw garlic, and use oak smoke instead of apple.

Here is the recipe (that I doubled):

5 lbs Boneless Pork Shoulder

2.0 cups diced sweet Onion (softened until translucent in olive oil & allowed to cool)

¼ Cup Roasted Garlic

1 Tblsp Garlic, minced

2 tsp Cayenne Pepper

1 tsp Red Pepper flakes

1 Tblsp Black pepper

40 grams Kosher salt

6 grams Pink salt

½ tsp dried Thyme

¾ tsp ground mace

1/8 tsp ground cloves

¾ tsp ground allspice

¾ tsp ground marjoram

½ cup dried non-fat milk

½ cup cold water

I divided the unground mixture in half and ground the first half with a coarse sieve, and the second half with a “chunk” sieve. Then I combined both halves with the powdered milk and ice water. I stuffed the sausages, and let them form a pellicle in the fridge overnight. The electric meat grinder works incredibly well. I tried using the stuffer tube on the meat grinder, but found it more difficult than using the LEM manual stuffer—also, the auger in the feeder tube reworked the sausage more than I preferred. The pre-tubed casings seemed to also work well…this time I remembered to soak them for 12+ hours in advance (I found out that one “tube” stuffed approximately 8 lbs of sausage).

Smoked sausages for about 8 hours with pecan & oak wood (50:50). This time I used a PID with the following stettings:

100 degrees (C1) for 1 hour (T1)

120 degrees (C2) for 3 hours (T2)

130 degrees (C3) for 1 hour (T3)

140 degrees (C4) for 1 hour (T4)

170 degrees (C5) for 2 hours (T5) –until internal temp reaches 150

End product turned out well. *What I learned from this attempt:* I had a bit of an issue maintaining desired temperatures with the PID. I later discovered that it is really important to maintain a water bowl in the smoker for the spent wood pucks to fall into. I hadn’t been doing this for a while (trying to get more smoke), but found this very important (even consider using ice water initially to better ensure low temperature maintenance). The sausages had a very nice flavor, but seemed a little less plump…probably from my temperature issue. Smoke flavor was a little strong, and raw garlic stood out. Recommend going back to version 3.0, but smoke for 8 hours. Making 10 lbs was a good plan—not much more effort for double the sausage. Next time, I will use the LEM manual stuffer.

**Chicken Andouille Sausage (Bulk), October 2015.** I followed the version 3 recipe, but substituted skinless chicken thigh meat in place of the pork. I also omitted the pink salt, but bumped up the kosher salt by 6 grams (didn’t know if pink salt actually added “salt” flavor).

Here is the recipe:

5 lbs Chicken Thighs (skinless/boneless)

2.0 cups diced sweet Onion (softened until translucent in olive oil & allowed to cool)

¼ Cup Roasted Garlic

1 Tblsp Garlic, minced

2 tsp Cayenne Pepper

1 tsp Red Pepper flakes

1 Tblsp Black pepper

46 grams Kosher salt

½ tsp dried Thyme

¾ tsp ground mace

1/8 tsp ground cloves

¾ tsp ground allspice

¾ tsp ground marjoram

½ cup dried non-fat milk

½ cup cold water

I ground it all with the course sieve. End product turned out well. I made burger patties and briefly browned them in a non-stick pan (maybe a minute per side), and finished them off in a 375 degree oven for 20 minutes. Flavor was well balanced & burgers were nice and moist. Definitely a keeper. *What I learned from this attempt:* My only slight criticism was the saltiness. It was just a tad saltier than I would have preferred (still very good). Next time, just use 40 grams of Kosher salt.

**Andouille Sausage 5.0, Dec. 2015.** I made some slight modifications to the recipe from last time (again). I still mostly followed the Ruhlman and Polcyn “Cold-Smoked Andouille” recipe (even though I will Hot-Smoke it), with some modifications from the internet (mainly from nolacuisine.com). This time, I’m making a double batch (10 lbs). Since last time making pork andouille, I decided to the pull back on the raw garlic, and use pecan (4 hours), apple (3 hours), and oak smoke (1 hour).

Here is the recipe (that I doubled):

5 lbs Boneless Pork Shoulder

2.0 cups diced sweet Onion (softened until translucent in olive oil & allowed to cool)

¼ Cup Roasted Garlic

1 Tblsp Garlic, minced

2 tsp Cayenne Pepper

1 tsp Red Pepper flakes

1 Tblsp Black pepper

40 grams Kosher salt

6 grams Pink salt

½ tsp dried Thyme

¾ tsp ground mace

1/8 tsp ground cloves

¾ tsp ground allspice

¾ tsp ground marjoram

½ cup dried non-fat milk

½ cup cold water

I divided the unground mixture in half and ground the first half with a coarse sieve, and the second half with a “chunk” sieve. Then I combined both halves with the powdered milk and ice water. I stuffed the sausages, and let them form a pellicle in the fridge overnight. The electric meat grinder works incredibly well. I went back to using the LEM sausage stuffer and pre-tubed casings (that soaked for 1 day in advance). My brother, Bryan, was helping, which made the stuffing process go much faster (this time, I found out that one “tube” easily stuffed the approximately 10 lbs of sausage, with plenty of leftover casing left on the tube).

Smoked sausages for about 8 hours with pecan (4 hours), apple (3 hours), & oak wood (1 hour). This time I used a PID with the following stettings:

100 degrees (C1) for 1 hour (T1)

120 degrees (C2) for 3 hours (T2)

130 degrees (C3) for 1 hour (T3)

140 degrees (C4) for 1 hour (T4)

170 degrees (C5) for 2 hours (T5) –until internal temp reaches 150

End product turned out well. *What I learned from this attempt:* The smoker with the PID held temperature very well. My smoker seemed to use fewer pucks than I expected (about 30 % were left after 8 hours), but I always saw smoke coming from the smoker The sausages had a very nice flavor. Smoke flavor was less than anticipated but good. [Note: later, I discovered the puck advancer on the smoker was partially malfunctioning. I used some canned air to blow out the sawdust debris, and everything worked like new.]

**Chicken Andouille Sausage (Smoked) 1.0, July 2016.** Mostly following the pork andouille version 5.0 recipe, which mostly followed the Ruhlman and Polcyn “Cold-Smoked Andouille” recipe (even though I will Hot-Smoke it), with some modifications from the internet (mainly from nolacuisine.com). This time, I’m making a double batch (10 lbs)—I bought between 12 and 13 lbs of bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs, which yielded 10.85 pounds of meat and skin. I am using the skin in this application, because I feel the fat and moisture will be needed to hold up to 8 or 9 hours of smoking. I plan to use pecan (4 hours), apple (4 hours), and oak smoke (1 hour) and am anticipating about an additional hour of cooking time in order to get to fully cooked for chicken sausage (160 degrees versus 150 for pork sausage).

Here is the recipe (that I doubled):

5 lbs Boneless Skin-on Chicken thighs

2.0 cups diced sweet Onion (softened until translucent in olive oil & allowed to cool)

¼ Cup Roasted Garlic

1 Tblsp Garlic, minced

2 tsp Cayenne Pepper

1 tsp Red Pepper flakes

1 Tblsp Black pepper

40 grams Kosher salt

6 grams Pink salt

½ tsp dried Thyme

¾ tsp ground mace

1/8 tsp ground cloves

¾ tsp ground allspice

¾ tsp ground marjoram

½ cup dried non-fat milk + 1 Tblsp gumbo file\*

½ cup cold water

I ground the chicken and skin with a coarse sieve. Then I combined both halves with the powdered milk, 1 Tblsp of gumbo file (\*I added this as an experiment—an Emeril recipe that I saw used gumbo file as a binder versus powdered milk, so I took a baby-step with this recipe), and ice water. I stuffed the sausages, and let them form a pellicle in the fridge overnight. In the morning, I pulled them out of the fridge and turned a fan on to further dry them (just for a half hour or so). As an aside, this recipe pretty much maxed out the smoker capacity (4 racks were very full). The electric meat grinder works incredibly well on chicken and skin. I used the LEM sausage stuffer and pre-tubed casings (that soaked for 1 day in advance). This time, I needed more than one tube (went about half way into a second tube).

Smoked sausages for about 9 hours with pecan (4 hours), apple (3 hours), & oak wood (2 hours). This time I used a PID with the following settings:

100 degrees (C1) for 1 hour (T1)

120 degrees (C2) for 3 hours (T2)

130 degrees (C3) for 1 hour (T3)

140 degrees (C4) for 1.5 hours (T4)

175 degrees (C5) for 3 hours (T5) – or until internal temp reaches 160

End product turned out pretty good. *What I learned from this attempt:* It really took too long to get the sausages to 160 degrees—11 hours! As a result, some of the sausages, particularly those on the lower racks got a little charred on the underside. Also, smoke flavor was pretty pronounced. The inside of the sausages were moist, however. The pepper notes were a little stronger than ideal…maybe because the chicken is leaner? The sausages did have a nice flavor, but next time dial back on the pepper a bit. Next time, I think cranking up the temperature sooner would be good. Something like:

100 degrees (C1) for 1 hour (T1)

125 degrees (C2) for 1 hour (T2)

140 degrees (C3) for 2 hours (T3)

160 degrees (C4) for 3 hours (T4)

185 degrees (C5) for 3 hours (T5)

I also think I may have over-packed the smoker with this recipe. Next time, I’ll consider making a 7.5 lb batch. NOTE: I seem to be learning—slowly—that the flavor profile of the sausages changes considerably after being frozen (even for as little time as a week). When I thawed-out a batch after being frozen for only a week, the sausages were NOT too spicy and they were less smoky. I will still work to get the smoking time back to closer to 8 or 9 hours, but will no longer plan to cut back on the pepper.

**Chicken Andouille Sausage (Smoked) 2.0, December 2016.** Mostly following the pork andouille version 5.0 recipe, which mostly followed the Ruhlman and Polcyn “Cold-Smoked Andouille” recipe (even though I will Hot-Smoke it), with some modifications from the internet (mainly from nolacuisine.com). This time, I’m making a double batch (10 lbs)—I recommend buying between 12 and 13 lbs of whole/bone-in thighs to yield about 10 lbs of meat/skin. I am using the skin in this application, because I feel the fat and moisture will be needed to hold up to 8 or 9 hours of smoking. I plan to use pecan (4 hours), apple (4 hours), and oak smoke (1 hour) and am anticipating about an additional hour of cooking time in order to get to fully cooked for chicken sausage (160 degrees versus 150 for pork sausage).

Here is the recipe (that I doubled):

5 lbs Boneless Skin-on Chicken thighs

2.0 cups diced sweet Onion (softened until translucent in olive oil & allowed to cool)

¼ Cup Roasted Garlic

1 Tblsp Garlic, minced

2 tsp Cayenne Pepper

1 tsp Red Pepper flakes

1 Tblsp Black pepper

40 grams Kosher salt

6 grams Pink salt

½ tsp dried Thyme

¾ tsp ground mace

1/8 tsp ground cloves

¾ tsp ground allspice

¾ tsp ground marjoram

½ cup dried non-fat milk + 1 Tblsp gumbo file\*

½ cup cold water

I ground the chicken and skin with a coarse sieve. Then I combined with the powdered milk, gumbo file (use a whisk to distribute the dry file powder in the dried powdered milk—this worked well), and ice water. I stuffed the sausages, and let them form a pellicle in the fridge overnight. As an aside, this recipe wound up using 9.1 lbs of raw chicken, and I was able to fit all sausages on 3 racks (it was pretty snug). I didn’t use the bottom rack in an effort to avoid the well-done sausages I had last time…we’ll see. The electric meat grinder worked incredibly well on chicken and skin. I used the LEM sausage stuffer and pre-tubed casings (that soaked for 1 day in advance). This time, I needed one tube.

Targeting a total smoke time of 8 to 9 hours with pecan (4 hours), apple (3 hours), & oak wood (2 hours). This time I used a PID with the following settings:

120 degrees (C1) for 2 hours (T1)

130 degrees (C2) for 1 hour (T2)

140 degrees (C3) for 2 hours (T3)

160 degrees (C4) for 2 hours (T4)

185 degrees (C5) for 2 hours (T5) – or until internal temp reaches 160

End product turned out good. *What I learned from this attempt:* I wound up smoking these sausages on New Years day (1/1/17). Wound up setting up the smoker in snow and 35 degree temps! The new cooking temps worked much better, and the sausages were done in about 8.5 hrs. Although much less than last time, some of the sausages, particularly those on the lower racks got a little over-done on the underside. Overall, improved flavor and texture, and I am pleased with the results. Not quite sure about how to avoid the well-done sausage undersides (small strips of aluminum foil under the individual sausages on the lowest rack?).

**Chicken Andouille Sausage (Smoked) 3.0, December 2017.** Mostly following the pork andouille version 5.0 recipe, which mostly followed the Ruhlman and Polcyn “Cold-Smoked Andouille” recipe (even though I will Hot-Smoke it and use chicken), with some modifications from the internet (mainly from nolacuisine.com). This time, I’m making a double batch (10 lbs)—and I am going to supplement skinless chicken with pork fat versus chicken skin/fat (per Ruhlman and Polcyn) in an attempt to have the sausages dry out less during the 8 or 9 hours of smoking.

Here is the recipe (that I doubled):

4 lbs Boneless Skinless Chicken thighs

1 lb Pork Fat

2.0 cups diced sweet Onion (softened until translucent in olive oil & allowed to cool)

¼ Cup Roasted Garlic

1 Tblsp Garlic, minced

2 tsp Cayenne Pepper

1 tsp Red Pepper flakes

1 Tblsp Black pepper

40 grams Kosher salt

6 grams Pink salt

½ tsp dried Thyme

¾ tsp ground mace

1/8 tsp ground cloves

¾ tsp ground allspice

¾ tsp ground marjoram

½ cup dried non-fat milk + 1 Tblsp gumbo file\*

½ cup cold water

I ground the chicken, pork fat, and spices with a coarse sieve. Then I combined with the powdered milk, gumbo file (use a whisk to distribute the dry file powder in the dried powdered milk—this worked well), and ice water. I stuffed the sausages, and let them form a pellicle in the fridge overnight. As an aside, this recipe wound up using exactly 10.0 lbs of raw chicken and pork fat, and I needed all four racks on the smoker this time. The electric meat grinder worked incredibly well on chicken and pork fat. I used the LEM sausage stuffer and pre-tubed casings (that soaked for a few hours in advance). This time, I needed one and a half tubes.

Targeting a total smoke time of 8 to 9 hours with pecan (4 hours), apple (3 hours), & oak wood (2 hours). This time I used a PID with the following settings:

120 degrees (C1) for 2 hours (T1)

130 degrees (C2) for 1 hour (T2)

140 degrees (C3) for 2 hours (T3)

160 degrees (C4) for 2 hours (T4)

185 degrees (C5) for 2 hours (T5) – or until internal temp reaches 160

End product turned out good. *What I learned from this attempt:* The new cooking temps worked fine, and the sausages were done in about 8.5 hrs. Some of the sausages, particularly those on the lower racks got a little over-done on the underside (pork fat didn’t help). Overall, improved flavor and texture, and I am pleased with the results. Still, not quite sure about how to avoid the well-done sausage undersides. I am beginning to think that for smoked chicken sausage (which cooks longer that pork sausage), I should only attempt batches of 7.5 lbs or less per attempt. I think that the combination of fully loading the smoker and the longer cooking times are resulting in a challenge achieving my plump but not overcooked objective. Product still had a very nice flavor and the pork fat did seem to keep the sausages a little more moist.

**Boudin—**

**Boudin, May 2015.** Made about 4 lbs of bulk sausage. I followed Donald Link’s recipe (from his “Real Cajun” cookbook) with the following modifications: 1) only used 0.25 lbs of liver, 2) used 2 jalapenos, 3) cut back on his red/white/black peppers by 1/3, and 4) used 3 + 0.75 cups of sushi rice. I had to cook the additional .75 cups of rice to soak up all of the liquid. *What I learned from this attempt:*  All considered, I would prefer less rice. So, instead of simmering the mixture for 1.75 hours, I think I will bring it to a rolling boil for the same amount of time (to reduce the liquid). The heat level was pretty good. I used some to stuff an artichoke with Beecher’s smoked cheddar…yum. Next time, I may also consider using some additional pork (and regular/pink salt), less rice (maybe brown) and adding more green onions & parsley at the end.

**Boudin version 2.0, July 2015.** Made about 5 lbs of bulk sausage. As before, I followed Donald Link’s recipe (from his “Real Cajun” cookbook) with the following modifications: 1) omitted liver (Kim is not a fan), 2) added 3.75 lbs of pork (adjusting pink salt to ¾ tsp), 3) used 2 jalapenos, 4) cut back on his red/white/black peppers by 1/3, and 4) used short-grain brown rice (2 cups uncooked). This time, I used the “chunk” sieve on the meat grinder for the cooked meat/veggies. I added the cooked rice, and proceeded to add the reserved cooking liquid until the consistency looked good. (I had extra unused liquid that was discarded). *What I learned from this attempt:*  Much better ratio of meat to rice this time. Flavor was good. Less spicy, but still some character. The flavor is a little different without the liver…not bad, just different. Will need to try in some stuffed bell peppers or something before I make final judgement. Much later, I did try it in some stuffed bell peppers. Flavor was good, but spice was very mellow. Next time, I’m thinking about adding back some of the pepper, and using long-grain brown rice. Kim liked it.

**Chicken Boudin version 1.0, May 2017.** Made about 9 lbs of bulk sausage. As before, I followed Donald Link’s “My Boudin”recipe (from his “Real Cajun” cookbook, pp 30-31) with the following modifications: 1) omitted liver (Kim is not a fan), 2) omitted pork, and, instead, added 4 lbs of skinless boneless chicken thighs (adjusting pink salt to a generous ¾ tsp), 3) used 2.5 jalapenos, 4) cut back on his red/white/black peppers by 1/3, 5) used 3 bunches of green onions and 2 bunches of parsley, and 6) used long-grain brown rice (2 ¼ cups uncooked). I pulsed the raw green onions and parsley a few times in the food processor to get a fairly fine dice. I used the “chunk” sieve on the meat grinder for the cooked meat/veggies and green onions/parsley. I added the cooked rice, and proceeded to add the reserved cooking liquid until the consistency looked good. (I had extra unused liquid that was discarded). *What I learned from this attempt:*  This was a good combination/ratio of meat-to-rice flavors. Chicken and brown long-grained rice worked great. It was less spicy than I prefer, but it was good, nevertheless. This is the second time that I found the spice (peppers) on the light side…I think now that I am doubling the amount of meat in the recipe, it is diluting the pepper. Next time, I think I will be brave and try going back to the full spice amounts called for in the recipe. Tried the sausage a day later (after it had a chance to sit in the refrigerator over-night—the spices mellowed even further. Yep, definitely up the spices next time. We’ll still enjoy this batch, however.

**Chorizo--**

**Mexican Chorizo, June 2014.** Made exactly according to Ruhlman and Polcyn. Made 2.5 lbs of bulk pork sausage with Kitchen Aid grinder. Perfect. *Lessons I took away from this attempt:*  Don’t change a thing.

**Linguica and Mexican Chorizo (both pork), May 2015.** Followed the same recipes as before, and, as before, everything came out wonderful.

**Chicken Sausage--**

**Chicken Sausage (Bulk), Sept. 2014.** Made 2.5 lbs each of **Hot Italian, Sweet Italian, Mexican Chorizo, and Linguica.** I used boneless, skinless chicken thighs and did not add any extra fat. Italian and chorizo recipes were from Ruhlman and Polcyn’s book, and linguica recipe is the same as described previously. I ground with the new meat grinder using small sieve after almost freezing the chicken (putting meat in freezer for approximately 30 to 45 minutes creates a good, semi-frozen consistency for grinding). The new meat grinder worked great on chicken! *What I learned from this attempt:* All of the recipes came out great. Taking care not to overcook the sausages, the spices and flavors were superb and the sausages weren’t too dry (which was a main worry with just lean chicken meat). Making 4 different types of sausage at the same time was labor intensive (lots of washing meat grinder parts between grinds, etc. In the future, making one or two types of sausages at once is probably a better plan.

**Chicken Apple Sausage (Bulk), Sept. 2014.** Made 3lbs of chicken apple sausage. I adapted a recipe from the internet (below).

Chicken Apple Sausage--

3 lbs Chicken (I used organic boneless, skinless thighs)

2 Tblsp Salt

1 tsp Fresh Thyme

1 tsp Fresh Sage

1 tsp Fresh Parsley

0.5 tsp Black Pepper

0.5 tsp Red Pepper Flakes

6 cloves Garlic

1 cup diced Apple (I used Fuji)

0.25 cup Apple Brandy

0.25 cup Ice Water

2 Tblsp Honey

Followed standard technique (although I didn’t let the spices season the meat overnight before grinding). What I think I learned from this attempt: The sausage was okay, but just okay: the mix came out somewhat wet (the raw apple contributed a lot of moisture), and the flavor was overall mild. You really couldn’t taste the apple, but the garlic was noticeable. Next time, I think it would be better to cut back on the garlic, pre-cook the apple (remove moisture), and figure out a way to get more apple flavor (I’m thinking about super concentrating apple juice and using 0.5 cup as the cold liquid). I also think you could easily double the sage and thyme, and use maple syrup instead of honey.

**Chicken Breakfast Sausage with Fresh Ginger and Sage (Bulk) and Pork Spicy Italian Sausage (Bulk), Jan., 2015.** Made 2 lbs of breakfast sausage. I used boneless, skinless chicken thighs and did not add any extra fat. I made 5.5 lbs of spicy Italian sausage with pork. All recipes were from Ruhlman and Polcyn’s book. *What I learned from this attempt:* All of the recipes came out great. Taking care not to overcook the chicken sausages, the spices and flavors were superb and the sausages weren’t too dry (which was a main worry with just lean chicken meat). The pork spicy Italian sausage was really good, but very spicy (not with pepper, but lots of spices). It is probably best used as a component in dishes rather than eaten as a patty on its own. Don’t get me wrong, it’s good.

***See also: Andouille Sausage section for both smoked chicken andouille and bulk chicken andouille recipes and Boudin Section for bulk chicken boudin sausage.***

**Linguica--**

**Linguica, June 2014.** Used same technique as with Chorizo. Located a recipe on the web. Once again, the bulk sausage turned out superb. *Lessons I took away from this attempt:* Don’t change a thing. Recipe follows:

**Fresh Linguica**

2.5 lbs Pork Shoulder, cubed

1-2 Tblsp Minced Garlic

1 Tblsp (20g) Kosher Salt

1 Tblsp Hot Smoked Paprika

1 Tblsp Sweet Smoked Paprika

1.5 tsp fresh oregano or marjoram

1 tsp White Pepper

0.5 tsp Black Pepper

0.5 tsp Crushed Red Pepper

0.75 tsp Sugar

0.25 cup Red Wine

1 Tblsp Red Wine Vinegar

Combine Pork Shoulder and dry spices (including garlic and fresh herbs). Let sit overnight in fridge. Grind sausage, add red wine and vinegar, and mix (primary bind).

**Italian Sausage—**

**Spicy and Sweet Italian Sausage, circa 2013.** This is from memory, because this represents one of the efforts I made before starting to keep these notes. I made two batches of pork bulk Italian Sausage, one following Ruhlman & Polcyn’s recipe for sweet Italian sausage and one following the recipe for spicy Italian sausage. Both turned out very good. Neither was terribly spicy from pepper, but the spicy recipe definitely had a much more bold flavor profile from other spices (like fennel and coriander). Wouldn’t change anything.

**Spicy Chicken Italian Sausage, May 2016, and September 2017.** Made 5 lbs of bulk sausage without stuffing, per Ruhlman & Polcyn’s recipe (Spicy Italian Sausage, page 122). Instead of pork (which is quite good), I used skinless chicken thighs. Flavor and texture is quite good…not hot, but full of many bold spices. Very lean, which is fine for use in sauces (which provide moisture). If considering stuffing in casings for grilling or other stand-alone uses, I would probably use thigh meat with the skin, to provide some fat (or just make pork Italian sausage). Having said that, I wouldn’t change anything for the use I was intending.

**Other Sausages—**

**Spicy Roasted Poblano Sausage, July 2015.** I made 2.5 lbs each of pork and chicken. I followed the recipe from Ruhlman & Polcyn almost exactly. For the chicken recipe, I used boneless thighs with skin. I added a tablespoon or so of roasted garlic to each recipe in addition to the raw, minced garlic. The flavor of both was very good. Definitely worth repeating.

***CHAPTER 5: SEAFOOD***

**Smoked Salmon, July 2014.** Purchased about 10 lbs of Copper River sockeye filet. Tried 3 recipes: 1) basic salt and brown sugar, 2) wet brine with apple juice, clove, allspice, sugar, and 3) Maple sugar, salt, and bourbon (this last one from Jim Tarantino’s Marinades, Rubs, Brines, Cures, and Glazes). I brined for 24 hours. I broke in the new Bradley smoker and smoked with alder smoke for about 5 hours (I don’t really remember the temps) until internal temp of 150 degrees was reached. End products were very dry, and in some cases, too salty (Tarantino’s recipe). *Lessons I learned from this attempt:* Don’t brine small filets (like sockeye) for more than 12 hours. Don’t hot smoke for more than 2 hours. Try a combination of alder wood and either cherry wood or apple wood

**Smoked Sockeye Salmon version 2.0, May 2015.** Okay, last recipes of salmon were underwhelming on many levels…too salty and too dry. After considerable research and on-line hand-wringing, I purchased an Auber PID Controller, which allows the Bradley Smoker to be operated within much more precise temperatures. This time, I purchased about 8 lbs of Copper River Sockeye filets from Costco (filets from 2 sockeye). I used a dry brine comprised of 1 cup Kosher salt and 4 cups brown sugar. I brined chunked filets for 8 hours, rinsed, and placed in rack in refrigerator overnight to form a pellicle.

The next day, I set up the smoker & PID and cooked for the following temps/times:

100 degrees for 1 hour

130 degrees for 2 hours

175 degrees for 1.5 hour

I monitored the internal temperature of a thicker filet and removed at 142 degrees (thinking residual heat would bring the temp up to 145 after removing from smoker). *What I learned from this attempt:* The PID really worked well. The flavor was very good…slightly sweet and not too salty. The texture was also good (moist), although I think the thicker filets were slightly underdone. I am also not sure that the thicker pieces fully cured. Next time, I might consider removing the tail-end pieces from the brine after 8 hours but leaving the thicker filets in the brine for another 2 to 4 hours. Also, I would change the second cooking temperature to 140 degrees for 2 hours (instead of 130), and let the thicker filets stay in the smoker until they fully reach 145 degrees (the internal temp did not continue to rise after removal).

**Smoked Sockeye Salmon version 3.0, May 2015.** This was only one week after my previous batch, and I just did some minor tweaks from last time. I purchased about 8 lbs of Copper River Sockeye filets from Costco (4 filets from 2 sockeye). I used a dry brine comprised of 1 cup Kosher salt, 2 cups brown sugar, and 2 cups of Demerara sugar. I brined chunked tail pieces for 8 hours and thicker chunks for 2 hours more, rinsed, and placed in rack in refrigerator overnight to form a pellicle.

The next day, I set up the smoker & PID and cooked for the following temps/times:

100 degrees for 1 hour

140 degrees for 2 hours

175 degrees for 1.5 hour

I monitored the internal temperature of a thicker filet and removed at 145 degrees. *What I learned from this attempt:* The flavor was very good…slightly sweet and not too salty. The Demerara sugar did not add any flavor over plain brown sugar. Next time, I will just use plain brown sugar (cheaper). I believe the brining time worked out well for sockeye. The texture was also good, although I think the thinner filets were slightly overdone (slightly dry). I also wouldn’t mind if the thicker pieces were a little more moist. Next time, I might consider removing the tail-end pieces from the smoker a half hour or so before the thicker pieces are done. Also, I would change the second cooking temperature back to 130 degrees for 2 hours (or 120 degrees for 1 hour and 130 degrees for 1 hour?).

**Smoked Sockeye Salmon version 4.0, July 2016.** This time I am only smoking 1 fish (2 filets). I used a dry brine comprised of 1 cup Kosher salt & 4 cups brown sugar. I brined chunked pieces for 8 hours, rinsed, patted dry with paper towels, and placed in rack in refrigerator overnight to form a pellicle.

The next day, I set up the smoker & PID and cooked for the following temps/times:

95 degrees (c1) for 1.5 hours (t1)

120 degrees (c2) for 1 hour (t2)

130 degrees (c3) for 1 hour (t3)

140 degrees (c4) for 1 hour (t4)

175 degrees (c5) for 1.5 hours (t5)

Smoking wood was comprised of 2/3 alder and 1/3 cherry wood. I monitored the internal temperature of a thicker filet and removed at 145 degrees. *What I learned from this attempt:* The flavor was very good…slightly sweet and not too salty. Minimal albumin. I think sockeye is just a little less moist than King in this preparation, but still a very good product.

**Smoked King Salmon, June 2015.**  This was only one week after my previous batch of sockeye. I purchased about 5 lbs of Copper River King filets from Costco (all from the thick part of the filets (no tail pieces) and chunked them into 1 lb pieces. I used a dry brine comprised of 1 cup Kosher salt and 4 cups brown sugar. I brined for 12 hours, rinsed, and placed in rack in refrigerator overnight to form a pellicle.

The next day, I set up the smoker & PID and cooked for the following temps/times:

100 degrees (c-1) for 2 hours (t-1)

120 degrees (c-2) for 1 hour (t-2)

130 degrees (c-3) for 1 hour (t-3)

140 degrees (c-4) for 2 hours (t-4)

175 degrees (c-5) for 2 hours (t-5)

The PID worked well, although it does still seem to shoot over the target temperature somewhat…so I reduced the settings of the above cooking steps by 5 degrees each. The salmon took approximately 7.5 hours to cook. A small amount of albumin formed on the surface. Overall, flavor was very good, and texture/moisture was great: firm but soft and moist. What I learned from this attempt: I don’t think I would change anything, except possibly ramping more evenly between the 140 degree and 175 degree steps (In an attempt to reduce albumin).

**Smoked King Salmon version 2.0, June 2015.**  This was only one week after my previous batch of King. I purchased about 12 lbs of Copper River King filets from Costco (all from the thick part of the filets (no tail pieces)) and chunked them into 1 lb pieces. I used a dry brine comprised of 1 cup Kosher salt and 4 cups brown sugar. I brined for 12 hours, removed excess brine from the pieces (did not rinse), and placed in rack in refrigerator overnight to form a pellicle.

The next day, I noticed the pellicle wasn’t terribly pronounced, so I put the salmon in front of a fan for about 2 hours. I set up the smoker (2/3 alder and 1/3 cherry) & PID and cooked for the following temps/times:

95 degrees (c-1) for 2 hours (t-1)

115 degrees (c-2) for 1 hour (t-2)

125 degrees (c-3) for 1 hour (t-3)

135 degrees (c-4) for 2 hours (t-4)

155 degrees (c-5) for 45 minutes (t-5)

175 degrees (c-6) for 2 hours (t-6)

The PID worked well after reducing most of the cooking temps by 5 degrees to account for overshooting. I removed the salmon when the internal temperature of a thick piece reached 145 degrees. The salmon took approximately 8.5 hours to cook. A small amount of albumin still formed on the surface (not sure if my attempt at ramping the temp more helped). Overall, flavor was very good, and texture/moisture was great. I liked reducing the amount of cherry wood smoke to 1/3…a little less heavy smoke flavor. *What I learned from this attempt:* I don’t think I would change anything, except possibly ramping more evenly between the 140 degree and 175 degree steps (In an attempt to reduce albumin).

**Smoked King Salmon version 3.0, October 2015.**  Got about 10-12 lbs of Columbia River king (“upriver brights”) fillets and chunked them into 1 lb pieces. As before, I used a dry brine comprised of 1 cup Kosher salt and 4 cups brown sugar (although I made a double batch of dry brine). I brined for 12 hours, removed excess brine from the pieces (rinsed), blotted with a paper towel to dry, and placed on rack in refrigerator for about 3 hours to form a pellicle.

After about 3 hours in the fridge, the pellicle was fairly well established (blotting with a paper towel really seemed to accelerate the formation), but I also put the salmon in front of a fan for about 1 hour. I set up the smoker (2/3 alder and 1/3 cherry) & PID and cooked for the following temps/times:

95 degrees (c-1) for 2 hours (t-1)

115 degrees (c-2) for 1 hour (t-2)

125 degrees (c-3) for 1 hour (t-3)

135 degrees (c-4) for 2 hours (t-4)

155 degrees (c-5) for 1 hour (t-5)

175 degrees (c-6) for 2 hours (t-6)

After about an hour or two, I noticed the PID was heating up considerably more than I had programmed. I tried lowering the temperature settings, but that didn’t seem to help. After a few hours of higher temperatures (up to 20 degrees higher), I added ice water to the bowl in the bottom of the smoker, which seemed to correct the issue. I think when spent pucks were falling into the empty bowl, they continued to smolder and added additional heat. I removed the salmon when the internal temperature of a thick piece reached 145 degrees. The salmon took approximately 8.5 hours to cook. A small amount of albumin still formed on the surface (not sure if my attempt at ramping the temp more helped). Overall, flavor was very good, and texture/moisture was great. I liked reducing the amount of cherry wood smoke to 1/3…a little less heavy smoke flavor. *What I learned from this attempt:* I don’t think I would change anything, except possibly ramping more evenly between the 140 degree and 175 degree steps (In an attempt to reduce albumin). Also, I will add ice water to the bowl when I start smoking.

**Smoked King Salmon version 4.0, April 2016.**  Got about 10-12 lbs of Columbia River spring Chinook and chunked them into 1 lb pieces. As before, I used a dry brine comprised of 1 cup Kosher salt and 4 cups brown sugar (although I made a double batch of dry brine). I brined for 12 hours (I let it brine while at work and therefore couldn’t rotate pieces periodically within the brine. There were a few, thicker pieces that needed a little more brining when I got home because of this. I left those few pieces in the brine for about 2 extra hours), removed excess brine from the pieces (rinsed), blotted with a paper towel to dry, and placed on rack in refrigerator overnight to form a pellicle.

The pellicle was fairly well established after chilling overnight. I set up the smoker (2/3 alder and 1/3 cherry) & PID and cooked for the following temps/times:

95 degrees (c-1) for 2 hours (t-1)

115 degrees (c-2) for 1 hour (t-2)

125 degrees (c-3) for 1 hour (t-3)

135 degrees (c-4) for 1.5 hours (t-4)

155 degrees (c-5) for 1.5 hours (t-5)

175 degrees (c-6) for 2 hours (t-6)

I made sure I used a water bowl for the spent pucks to fall into, and the PID held temperature like a pro. I removed the salmon when the internal temperature of a thick piece reached 145 degrees. The salmon took approximately 8 hours to cook. A small amount of albumin still formed on the surface (not sure if my attempt at ramping the temp more helped). Overall, flavor was very good, and texture/moisture was great. I liked reducing the amount of cherry wood smoke to 1/3…a little less heavy smoke flavor. *What I learned from this attempt:* I don’t think I would change anything, except possibly ramping more evenly between the 140 degree and 175 degree steps (In an attempt to reduce albumin). Also, during my most recent previous use of the smoker (making Andouille at Xmas), I noticed that the pucks were not feeding every 20 minutes (more like every 40 mins). This time, I used some canned air to thoroughly clean out the area where the puck drops for advancing. This seemed to work well, as pucks fed every 20 minutes or so. I will make this part of my routine smoker maintenance.

**Smoked King Salmon version 5.0, May 2017.**  Got 4 whole Columbia River Spring Chinook. Followed version 4.0 recipe exactly. I had to divide the fish up into 2 batches, because it was more meat than could fit in the smoker at once. For one batch, I used a fan for 2 hours to form a pellicle before smoking. For the second batch, I placed the salmon on a rack in the refrigerator overnight to form a pellicle (after blotting them dry with a paper towel). Both methods worked well, but I did notice a difference in cooking time. The batch that was left in front of the fan took about an hour’s less time to cook than the refrigerated batch (8 hours of cooking time versus 9 hours of cooking time). Both tasted fine, but it is useful to know that one can either shorten or lengthen the cooking time (depending on how much smoking time you want) in this way. By the way, 4 whole king salmon (approximately 12 lbs each), yielded about 19 lbs of finished, smoked salmon meat (noting that I used about half of one fillet for grilling, so it never made it to the smoker).

**Smoked King Salmon, May 2018.** Got another 4 whole Columbia River Springers. Again, followed version 4 recipe exactly. End product was very good (again). I did notice that it was easier to get a more consistent brine penetration on the filets if you keep your fish stacked no more that 2 layers. Great recipe!

**Smoked Coho Salmon version 1.0, July 2016.** I was given 2 small coho, so I thought I’d try smoking them up. I followed the “Smoke Sockeye Salmon version 4.0, July 2016” recipe. For 4 fillets, I used a dry brine comprised of 1.5 cups Kosher salt & 6 cups brown sugar. I brined chunked pieces for about 9 hours, rinsed, patted dry with paper towels, and placed in rack in refrigerator overnight to form a pellicle.

The next day, I set up the smoker & PID and cooked for the following temps/times:

95 degrees (c1) for 1.5 hours (t1)

120 degrees (c2) for 1 hour (t2)

130 degrees (c3) for 1 hour (t3)

140 degrees (c4) for 1 hour (t4)

175 degrees (c5) for 2.5 hours (t5)

Smoking wood was comprised of 2/3 alder and 1/3 cherry wood. I monitored the internal temperature of a thicker filet and removed at 145 degrees. *What I learned from this attempt:* The flavor was very good…slightly sweet and not too salty. Minimal albumin. I think coho is just a little less moist than King or sockeye in this preparation, but still a very good product.