



WOOD PRODUCTS AS FLAVOR ENHANCERS

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Flavor Enhancing Using Wood and Wood Products

Wood and wood products are used for everything from building homes, making paper, providing heat for comfort and cooking and for flavoring food. The most popular woods for flavoring foods are hickory, mesquite, pecan, alder, maple, apple and cherry. The best smoke flavor comes from fruit and nut hardwoods.

When using wood products for flavoring food it is a **MUST** to use only hardwood logs, sawdust, chips, planks, biscuits bits, or pellets. Be careful, when buying sawdust, as it is not always 100% hardwood. Storing wood products off the ground in a dry sheltered place will season and also dry it. So it is necessary to sometimes soak some products in water to provide more smoke and fewer flare-ups.

Of all the heat sources for your cooker, whether gas, electric, charcoal or wood, only wood can smoke flavor your food. Any smoke generated from gas, electric or charcoal is coming from your food; you are basting your food in the smoke created from its own drippings. That's why food tastes virtually the same when cooked on gas, electric or charcoal without flavor enhancers.

Smoke flavor enhancers from wood and wood products are added **AFTER** the gas, electric or charcoal cooker/grill/pit is heated and ready to cook on, and right before the food is placed in the cooker/grill/pit. As the flavor enhancer is consumed in the fire, it releases smoke, which flavors your food. Smoke from wood logs (that also supply the cooking heat) will flavor enhance the food for entire time they are burning

Flavor Enhancers:

Wood Logs: Can provide a heat and smoke source. Will enhance the food since the smoke will continue to be produced as long as there is not too much air. If you starve wood of oxygen when you heat it, it smokes rather than burning quickly to ash. Sometimes bark is removed for a milder smoke.

Wood Chunks: Use by adding to a heat source to provide smoke. The smoke is then used to flavor food. For the best results always use wood that is properly sized for your smoker. This wood is small cut especially for the smoker oven type of smokers but also works well with pits and smokehouses. Use for flavoring meat when another source of fuel is used to do the actual cooking. .

Wood Biscuits: Some smokers such as Bradley's units burn biscuits, which feed automatically through the smoke generator to create clean, cool smoke. Unlike wood chunks or sawdust, biscuits are made to exacting standards using controlled pressures and densities. This process ensures that these biscuits will not burst into flame and will provide the slow, low temperature burn required for a true cold smoke.

Bradley flavor bisquettes™ are an example of these biscuits, each of which brings its own distinctive aroma to your recipes and imparts wonderful flavor to smoked foods. Biscuits can also be used in a pan over a burner to produce a steady flow of clean smoke for 20-30 minutes without tending. Simply place a biscuit in the pan and add more when needed.

Sawdust: When using sawdust it is sometimes desirable to add water to facilitate more smoke. Also, soaking your chips in water will allow for fewer flare-ups and more smoke and a slower burn. Sawdust is the most economical way to induce smoke into meats and is used primarily in smokehouses where the need for heat is supplied in other ways.

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Sawdust produces dense smoke. It should be smoldered instead of burned. A pan over a hot plate will work fine, use a vented lid to control the air supply.

Smoke Bags: These are cloth bags filled with sawdust. They come in several popular flavors. Soak in water for a while prior to placing on a heat source. Add when your cooker/smoker/grill is up to temp.

Wood Bits: This product is very coarse sawdust much like the sawdust produced by chain saws. It can be put in chip boxes or aluminum foil pouches to provide smoke.

Pellets: Pellets are a unique form of natural wood, made of compressed sawdust. When pellets are made, all of the air within the cellular structure of the wood is evacuated, thus concentrating the wood into a very dense form, much denser than the natural tree. As compared to other wood flavor enhancers, pellets will yield a more intense smoke more quickly which seals the food, locking in natural moisture and adding smoke flavor exactly when it's needed. Since pellets have been processed from sawdust by pressure, which generates heat, any contaminants present in the wood are eliminated. This process produces a smoking wood product of consistent quality. Pellets are easy to use since you do not soak in water prior to use. It's easy to blend wood flavors with pellets and easy to repeat successful cooking results.

Some grills have a dispenser that feeds from a storage hopper to a burning box at a controlled rate. This rate is adjustable based on whether you want a high temperature for grilling or a low temperature for smoking.

You can also make a pouch of heavy-duty aluminum with just one tiny hole in one side works great to provide smoke in most outdoor cookers. To make a foil pouch, cut a piece of heavy duty aluminum foil 6" by 12" and fold in half making a 6"x6" square. Fold the side edges at least twice, pressing each fold firmly along the entire side. Put 1/3 of a cup of pellets in the pouch and fold the top to seal. Poke a hole in one side of the pouch with a toothpick. Place the pouch on top of your charcoal briquettes or above the gas flame. When the smoke starts coming out of the hole in the pouch, put your food on the cooking grate and close the cover of your cooker. Smoke should last up to 30 minutes depending on the temperature of your cooker.

If you have a smoke box made for chips, restrict the air with foil when you're using pellets. Remember, one hole is all you need.

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