



# SAUSAGE FEST

## *How the Sausage is Made*

BY MIKE GENNARO

Has this ever happened to you? You're chatting with someone who has lived in Zachary for years and they just happen to casually mention the words "sausage festival" in normal conversation. Huh?

That's because Zachary used to host an event known by that name. If sausage wasn't already a funny enough food, bringing people together for a "sausage fest" is quirkiness to a level 10 and something that only the Urban Dictionary can explain to the pure of mind. While these two words have certainly taken on other meanings over the years, there is no doubt that this festival has left an indelible mark on the town.

Some are advocating for its return. Others are more jaded by the cause of its demise—rumored to be due to a slip-and-fall lawsuit. Is that really why it ended? We first turned to Bobby Yarborough of Manda Fine Meats for answers, but the sausage baron could not be reached by press time.

Manda was located in Zachary for years, and this is the namesake of the festival. The festival's name is actually the Sausage Festival of Louisiana, Inc., and the LLC was active from 1988 through 1998. Officers and agents included Lonny Myles, Charlene Smith, and Laura Steen.

If all of this talk of sausage is making you a little hungry, you don't have to attend a festival to crank out some amazing sausage in this region—whether you prefer brats, kielbasa, or good ole deer sausage. Encased meat began as a meat preservation tactic by many ancient civilizations: salt and smoke are what make the magic of preservation happen.

So how are typical Louisianians making sausage out of their own kitchens? I turned to our Field & Garden ultimate wingman, Stephen Mayronne, to learn first-hand how the sausage is made.

Stephen planned a venison and Boston butt mixture, as well as a breakfast sausage. This is a perfect Louisiana Spring tradition, because it requires fair weather and a team of 3-4 people working 4-5 hours to accomplish. Team roles: de-boning, sausage grinder, seasoning mixer, casing feeder (only take this role if you draw the short end of the stick, just saying). Encasement is no longer made of intestines, but it's still a really tricky job.

After the deboning work is through, the mix goes to the grinding station. The kids underfoot, LSU baseball, and a Benjy Davis Project soundtrack from 2002 made the perfect backdrop to the whirr of the grinder.

The five star rated MEAT! Your Maker 1.5HP grinder costs a cool—*hide the price from your spouse*—\$700 and puts out 18 pounds per minute. Traditionalists and frugal minded sausage makers may go with manual grinders, which are sure to earn one instant Parrain level street cred. Don't forget the vertical manual stuffer, in this case a MEAT! Your Maker 5 pound stuffer.

Once the sausage exits the grinder in a perfect mix, it goes into two aluminum pans to be seasoned and mixed further by hand. Be sure to wear gloves, unless you want a sausage manicure—we do live in a society.

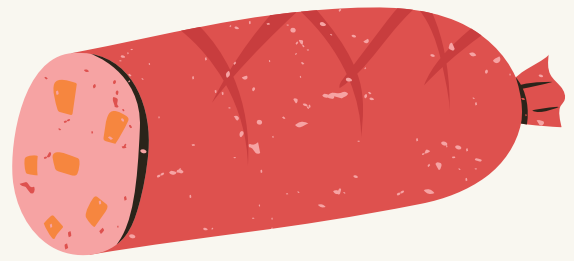
## The Sweet Heat Recipe

(Per 5lbs of 30/70 Venison/ Boston Butt Mix)

- 1 Tbsp Sea Salt
- ¼ Cup Brown Sugar
- 3 Tbsp Dried Sage
- 1 Tbsp Fresh Ground Black Pepper
- 4 Tbsp Paprika
- 1 Tbsp Crushed Red Pepper

## Breakfast Sausage:

- 1.5 Tbsp Salt
- 3 Tsp Pepper
- 4 Tsp Sage
- 4 Tsp Thyme
- 2 Tsp Brown Sugar or Maple Syrup
- 1 Tsp Ground Nutmeg
- 2-2.5 Tsp Cayenne (Depending on level of coonass)
- 2-2.5 Red Pepper Flakes (Optional)



Finally, sausage must be encased to really call itself sausage, and this is one of the funniest parts of the process. Have one team member scrunch up the encasement onto the stuffer, and the other member turns the crank. It's like an awkward playdough factory for kids of all ages.

What I learned, as a complete novice sausage maker, is that as long as you get the mix of lean to fat and salt correct, sausage recipes can be really wild and still amazing. This is why sausage recipes are so unique to cultural traditions. While I'll always be partial to Italian sausage, I appreciate the different combinations we find in this region, including pineapple, cream cheese, jalapeno, and maple—the list goes on and on.

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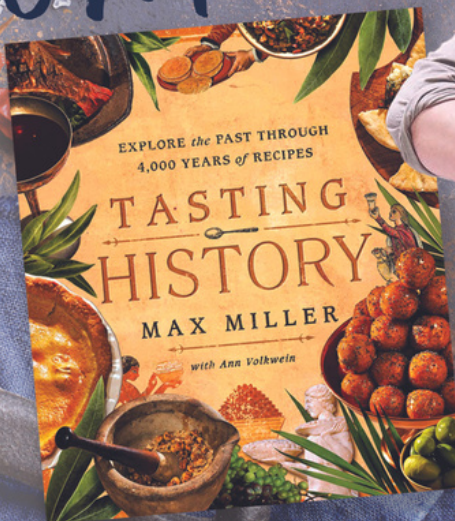
Stephen Mayronne and Mike Fontenot working at the backyard sausage factory. Great wingmen are the “missing link” to any successful operation.



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