

What is an Artisan Sausage?

An artisan sausage is a handmade and hand crafted product and should reflect the skills of the producer and butcher and do justice to the animal it came from. Whilst the *quality* of the meat is of prime importance, the selection of herbs, spices and wine or beer plays a significant part in the overall *flavour* of a sausage.

Texture and *bite* is a function of mincing and mixing as much as the preparation of the *flavourings*. How much you grind spices and when to introduce fresh ingredients is key. A good sausage recipe will yield a result that is more than the sum of the components - that is the skill of the artisan!

If your aim is to recreate the flavour of a sausage you once ate as a child or on holiday then you will be unhappy with a bought in mix or without research into the traditions of that area and considering how that sausage was made. Our memory usually embellishes, so the best way to recreate a recipe is to learn the flavours of your ingredients and methods true to the area that sausage comes from and practice regularly so you have a toolbox of flavours and a compass to work by. An artisan sausage maker is a food historian as well as a renaissance man.

British butchers often say that you *have* to use bread or fillers like rusk or cereal to get a 'moist' or 'succulent' sausage. This is a load of rubbish. A modern British pork sausage is all too often the repository of the parts of a pig that a butcher can't be bothered to make into *paté* or *rillettes* and *filler* a means of holding in surplus fat, skin or body parts that cannot be sold separately.

Again, we must look to our history to see why the British public has come to accept a flacid pink 'banger' (so called because wartime sausages were so filled with water they often exploded when they were fried) as an acceptable alternative to a cut of meat or game.

In short, the British working class moved off the land to the towns between 1750 and 1850. By the First World War less than half the population had close family connections with the land, and in particular the pigsty, so they became reliant on the local butcher as a source of sausages. With the [privations of war](#) better quality sausages became less common and the poverty of the interwar years made recipes with bread and cereal fillers the norm. Another World War later, the introduction of rationing in 1940 and the 'utility sausage'¹ made this transformation complete.

Now the British banger compares unfavourably with just about any European counterpart. With even an award winning British sausage, any French or Italian would be hard pressed to make a pasta sauce or *cassoulet* - there just isn't the lean meat content or *flavour*.

¹ meat was rationed to a maximum of 1s.2d per week in January 1940 and enforced with ration books containing coupons. Bacon and ham was rationed to 8oz then down to 4oz. 1s 2d bought about 1 lb 3 oz (540 g) of [meat](#) legally. [Offal](#) and [sausages](#) were only rationed from 1942 to 1944 but even when sausages were not rationed, the meat or skins needed to make them was so scarce that they were very rarely seen. The meat content of sausages was so low that a Lincoln woman remembers a man remarking to her, as their bus passed a queue for sausages, "Why queue? - you can get bread without queuing the other side of the road." One Essex housewife joked, "We didn't know whether to put mustard or marmalade on them".