

Cold smoking relies on a steady low temperature heat source or a long pipe from the 'fire pit' or smoke generator so that the smoke chills to ambient temperature before it enters the smoking chamber from below. The traditional method of cold smoking is to dig a firebox connected by a pipe some feet away from the smoking chamber and set the wood chips or sawdust to smoulder with a gas poker then damp it down to maintain a steady smoulder with the smoke vented through a flue pipe chilled in the ground leading to the smoke chamber.

A smoker can feature any construction from cardboard box to insulated smokehouse. The first question to ask is whether you want to *cook* as you smoke your food then decide *how often* you need to smoke and the financial constraints of your hobby. The only essential is making the smoke chamber reasonably smoke tight between smoke inlet and chimney and ensuring that the smoke distributes evenly around the food to be smoked.

At it's simplest all you need is a cardboard box, a biscuit or tomato tin or [ProQ sawdust smoker](#), temperature gauge, a [stackable baking rack](#) and a [timer](#) to remind you to refill with sawdust.

For beginners the ProQ is a very simple and efficient device for cold smoking since it generates very little heat and can be used inside a packing chest or dustbin sized smokebox.

Cold smoking is carried out at *ambient* temperature (and therefore better suited to the Winter months) so it is suitable for bacon, sausages, cheese, garlic or spices. Hot smoking is used where you want to *cook* the product like chicken or frankfurters for example which means you need a temperature probe for your food and racks for more delicate items like fish which can fall apart if overcooked.

In almost all setups *simplicity is a virtue* and it is a good idea to build up some practical and taste experience before lashing out money on automated machinery which may not do a superior job since smoked food is very much a personal preference. The advantage of automation is to repeatability and the ability to smoke reliably unattended (unless you use something like a ProQ below).

As a novice, what you will soon discover is that food smoked commercially usually tastes pretty much the same and the smokey flavour you are used to was achieved with the application of [liquid smoke](#). When you smoke yourself you can control how long to smoke and the flavour of the smoke by using different hardwoods. There is very little you cannot smoke.



For regular amateur smoking a simple [IKEA plastic box](#) with a [baked bean tin smoke generator](#) is a not too ambitious [project](#). For a more sophisticated smoker a simple firebox can be made from a [metal](#)