

TOM THUMB SAUSAGE RECIPE

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Follow our step-by-step, photo illustrated recipe to prepare this old time Southern favorite sausage. Tom Thumb, sometimes called a Dan Doodle, is an almost forgotten treasure. We'll serve it up with Cabbage and Purple Hull Peas for a true taste of the past. Printable recipe included.



TOM THUMB SAUSAGE

Tom Thumb Sausage with Cabbage and Purple Hull Peas Recipe

Skip on down for the actual recipe, or take a few minutes to read about the story behind it. Even if you never get to try it, I do hope you'll enjoy reading about it.

I have to consider that this is probably a recipe that you'll never try. Not because it's not good, but because you probably can't find a Tom Thumb Sausage in your local grocery store. They're almost a forgotten piece of our Southern cuisine history. But, maybe we can help change that.

Tom Thumbs are sometimes referred to as a Dan Doodle. Here in North Carolina, we call it a Tom Thumb. Up in Virginia, it's better known as a Dan Doodle. So, what is it either way?

Tom Thumbs are spicy hot sausage, usually with a good amount of Sage, that is stuffed inside a pig's appendix. Don't let that turn you off.

In the old days of hog killing time, lots of sausage was made and stuffed inside pig's intestines. The sausage was usually then hung up in a smokehouse to dry and often times smoked with wood to give it more flavor.

The intestines, once removed from the butchered pig, were washed inside and out very well. At least you HOPED they were washed out really well. Smile. As you can imagine, they didn't smell very

good at the time they were being cleaned.

Intestines that weren't used for stuffing sausage were cooked. Those were called "chitlins" but officially known as Chitterlings. That's another recipe for another day.

I first heard of the Tom Thumb through a North Carolina produced television program known as "[A Chef's Life.](#)" It's now in about it's 5th season and airs on [Public Broadcasting Television](#) or PBS.

You can view the programs online through the PBS website. Just do a search for "A Chef's Life." I love watching it and think you might as well.

Vivian Howard and her husband Ben are the main characters in the program. Vivian explores many of the old Southern traditional recipes, then gives them her own twist, which she serves in her Kinston, North Carolina restaurant – Chef & the Farmer. She's done very well with it.

Vivian visited the Nahunta Pork Center down in Pikeville, North Carolina during one of the episodes and found they still make and carry the Tom Thumb Sausage. Vivian remembered her own family serving it when she was younger, and found it was a sausage stuffed inside a pigs appendix.

She proceeds to cooking the sausage and serving it to about 400 foodies at a big gathering down in Mississippi, folks that probably had never heard of it either.

Having been to the same pork center in Pikeville myself, next time I stopped in, I had to purchase a Tom Thumb sausage to see what all the fuss was about. I was intrigued by it being an old Southern dish, and even more so by the fact that I had never heard it mentioned before. Most of my older friends say they don't remember it when I question them about it.

Turns out, at least in my opinion, it's just a spicy hot, sage infused sausage. I guess it's the pigs appendix part that stirs up the "turn up your nose" part about it.

Vivian says she wants to bring the Tom Thumb Sausage "back." Make it special again. In that respect, I'm here to help.

While you can purchase a Tom Thumb Sausage at the Nahunta Pork Center, I'm afraid they do not currently ship them. They need refrigeration in shipping, so they don't currently offer that on their

website.

I must also give credit to the Internet site "[Our Daily Brine.](#)" They offer a deeper look into the Tom Thumb and the Dan Doodle than what I go into here. They do mention a place where they have purchased the Dan Doodle, but it appears that location in Virginia no longer carries them.

Vivian may offer a recipe for the Tom Thumb in her cookbook, "Deep Run Roots," but I haven't seen the cookbook and don't know that for certain.

I watched the television episodes that featured the story about her cooking the sausage, and developed the recipe below based on that and the info in the Our Daily Brine story.

So, what to do if you can't find a Tom Thumb?

Cook yourself up a pot of Cabbage and Peas, serve it alongside your favorite sausage, and think about enjoying a Tom Thumb anyway. Maybe one day you'll have the chance to try the real thing.

I hope you enjoy the recipe and the story about it either way. But, if you're ready to give the recipe a try, then let's head for the kitchen, and... Let's Get Cooking."



Tom Thumb Sausage Recipe: You'll need these ingredients.



This is a Tom Thumb Pork Sausage.

I purchased this from [Nahunta Pork Center](#) in Pikeville, North Carolina. It's a hot seasoned sausage stuffed in a pigs appendix. In the "good old days" sausage was often stuffed inside pigs intestines, then dried and smoked to preserve it for use throughout the year.

Using the pigs appendix for sausage was just another way to take advantage of everything available during hog killing time without wasting any more of the pig than was necessary.



Rinse the sausage under cool running water.

While this one didn't have it, many of the tom thumbs in the old days would develop a mold on the outside during the drying, smoking and curing process. The mold didn't harm it, but needed to be gently scrubbed away before the sausage was cooked.



Set the tom thumb aside and let it drain while you prepare the vegetables for the broth.



Rinse the vegetables under cool running water.



Slice the carrots into small pieces.



Do the same with the celery and the onion.



Place a 6 quart Dutch Oven on your stove top over medium heat. Add the bacon grease.



Add the vegetables to the pot.

The French refer to this as a Mirepoix (meer-pwah). The combination of celery, carrots, and onions is the base for many dishes including stocks. We're using it to provide flavor to the stock we'll later be cooking our cabbage and peas in.



Cook the veggies, stirring often, until the onions become translucent.

Watch the veggies carefully and don't let them start to burn. Once the onions are clear, place the tom thumb sausage on top of the vegetables.



Add enough warm water to the pot to just cover the tom thumb.



Bring everything up to a low boil.



Cover the pot. Reduce the heat down just a little and let the tom thumb sausage simmer for about

45 minutes.

Side Story on this recipe: During the process of making this recipe, the lights at my house started blinking off and on every couple of minutes. The weather was clear, but a little windy on this day.

I began to wonder if I was about to lose electricity, and was concerned about starting to cook the sausage. Sure enough, about 15 minutes after I covered the pot, I lost power.

After reporting the outage, I was told it would be about two hours before the power would be restored due to some trees that had fallen on power lines. I left the sausage in the pot for about 30 minutes, then finally removed it and placed it in the freezer to quickly cool it down.

Turns out, about ten thousand people lost power in my area that day. Mine stayed off for right at three hours, and by the time it came back on, I thought it was too late in the evening to continue with the recipe. So, everything was refrigerated and it was two days later before I had the chance to finish.

See, things happen, but you just keep calm and go with the flow. Right?



Meanwhile, two days later, I started back up and cooked the sausage. Once it had cooked for the 45 minutes, I removed it from the dutch oven and set it aside to cool. About 15 minutes later, I placed it in the refrigerator to cool down and help it to firm up.



You'll need another bowl to do this. Drain the broth through a colander and remove the vegetables.



Return the broth to the dutch oven.

Another side note: The sausage produced a lot of fat in the broth. That's what those white looking spots are in the photo above.

Since I had to refrigerate the stock due to the power failure, the fat solidified pretty much and was easy to remove prior to placing the broth back in the dutch oven.

Should you try the recipe, I suggest you drain off as much of the fat as possible. You don't want all that grease in your cabbage and peas.



While the broth is heating back up, cut the cabbage into bite sized pieces.



I measured out two cups of purple hull peas.

While they look like black eyed peas, there is a slight difference between the two. Most black eyed peas are purchased as dry beans, while the purple hulls are usually purchased as frozen.

There's a slight difference in taste with many folks thinking the purple hull peas have a fresher and more flavorful taste than the black eyed peas.

Look for them in the frozen vegetables section of your local grocer. I think you'll like them, but if you can't find them, regular black eyes will certainly work just as well.



Add the cabbage to the pot.



Add the peas to the pot.



Stir everything together.

We're not adding any salt or pepper to the recipe. The sausage has provided a good deal of both to

the broth already. I don't show it here, but I couldn't resist adding a teaspoon of sugar to the pot. It's just a Southern thing, something Mama always added to her vegetables as they cooked.



I suggest you cover your dutch oven while the cabbage and peas cook. I didn't, and most of my broth cooked away during the process as you may be able to see in the photo above.

Still, I had just enough to get the peas and cabbage cooked until tender.

At this point, you should taste it to see if you'd like to add any more salt and pepper. I didn't think it needed any.

Had it been overly salty, I would have just added a bit of water and cooked a bit longer.



Remove the tom thumb from the refrigerator and slice it into about 3/4 inch slices or a little thicker.



Place slices of the tom thumb in your favorite skillet. Of course, I prefer using my Mama's old cast iron skillet. Love it!



Brown the sausages on both sides, turning as needed to prevent burning.



Serve warm and Enjoy!

Serve up a slice or two of the Tom Thumb Sausage with a portion of the cooked Cabbage and Peas.

A piece of cornbread and a glass of sweet tea will turn this into a complete meal. Enjoy!