

# HOMEMADE PASTRAMI

## WITH CORIANDER-PEPPER RUB

**SERVES:** 6 TO 8 | **PREP TIME:** 10 MINUTES | **SOAKING TIME:** 8 TO 16 HOURS | **COOKING TIME:** 4½ TO 5½ HOURS  
**STANDING TIME:** 1 HOUR | **CHILLING TIME:** AT LEAST 8 HOURS | **SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:** SPICE MILL; WATER SMOKER; 2 LARGE HANDFULS APPLE WOOD CHUNKS; HEAVY-DUTY ALUMINUM FOIL; SPRAY BOTTLE FILLED WITH WATER; INSTANT-READ THERMOMETER

### RUB

1½ tablespoons black peppercorns  
1½ tablespoons coriander seed  
1½ teaspoons yellow mustard seed  
1½ teaspoons paprika  
¾ teaspoon granulated garlic  
¾ teaspoon granulated onion  
¾ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

1 corned beef brisket, about  
4 pounds, preferably the flat end  
Vegetable oil

*A butcher in a New York deli might take weeks to make cured, spice-crusted, and smoked pastrami from raw brisket, but my streamlined version starts with a store-bought corned beef, greatly reducing the prep time.*

- 1 In a spice mill coarsely grind the peppercorns, coriander seed, and mustard seed (see tip No. 2 below). Put the ground spices in a bowl and add the remaining rub ingredients.
- 2 Drain the brisket and rinse well under cold running water. If necessary, trim the fat cap so it is about ½ inch thick, but no less. Place the brisket in a deep roasting pan or other food-safe container and cover it completely with cold water. Refrigerate for at least 8 hours or up to 16 hours, changing the water every few hours.
- 3 Drain the brisket and pat dry with paper towels. Very lightly brush the brisket all over with oil and season evenly with the rub, pressing the rub firmly with your hands to make sure it adheres securely to the meat.
- 4 Prepare the smoker for indirect cooking with low heat (as close to 250°F as possible).
- 5 Add the wood chunks to the charcoal, and then cook the brisket over **indirect low heat**, with the lid closed, for 2 hours. Remove the brisket from the smoker and place it on a large sheet of heavy-duty aluminum foil. Spray the brisket on both sides with water, and then tightly wrap in the foil. Return the brisket to the smoker and continue cooking over **indirect low heat**, with the lid closed, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the meat registers 190°F to 195°F, 2½ to 3½ hours more. Remove from the grill, open the foil, lift the brisket from the juices, and place it on a clean piece of foil. Wrap it well and let stand for 1 hour. Refrigerate until completely chilled, at least 8 hours.
- 6 Unwrap the pastrami and cut it across the grain into very thin slices. Place a collapsible steamer inside a large saucepan. Add enough water to come up to ¼ inch from the bottom of the steamer and bring the water to a boil over high heat on the stove. Add the sliced pastrami to the steamer and tightly cover the saucepan. Reduce the heat to very low. Steam, occasionally moving the slices from top to bottom, until the pastrami is hot and the fat is translucent, 15 to 20 minutes. Serve warm with bagels and scrambled eggs, if desired.

## TIPS } HOMEMADE PASTRAMI

1

Purchase corned beef from the flat end of the brisket, not the thicker, fattier point end. Corned beef of the proper size (about 4 pounds) may not be easy to find outside of its St. Patrick's Day sales window. Look for it at warehouse stores. If you can only find a very large corned beef brisket (about 8 pounds), cut it in half and double the recipe.

2

The peppercorns, coriander seed, and mustard seed vary in size and hardness, so grind each spice separately to get the right coarseness. Use an electric spice mill.

3

Resist the temptation to tear into the pastrami right off the smoker, as it needs to be chilled overnight to facilitate thin slicing. Use a sharp, thin-bladed carving knife for slicing.

4

The classic way to reheat pastrami is over steam. If you prefer, reheat the slices in a microwave: spread the slices in a heatproof dish, sprinkle them with 2 tablespoons of water, cover the dish, and microwave at medium until they are hot, 3 to 5 minutes.

5

Leftovers will keep for about 5 days in the refrigerator. Smoked meats do not freeze well.