

Cooking with Lard

Things You Will Need:

- 2 to 4 pounds pork fat*
- Coffee filter or cheesecloth
- Wooden spoon
- Airtight jars or containers

*Use only the freshest pork fat, since its flavor and odor rapidly become unpleasant. The best lard comes from the hard fat around the kidneys, but any pork fat works well.

PREPARATION:

Cut or grind your pork fat into small pieces. This isn't necessary, but small pieces render more quickly and thoroughly than larger pieces. Fill your crock-pot with pork fat until it's about three-quarters full. Turn the slow cooker to its high setting and replace the lid.

*Tip: For milder tasting lard, render the pork on the low setting of the crock-pot rather than high, for six to eight hours. Lard rendered at the lower setting will be milder and less "porky," therefore, better for baking.

Cook the pork fat until it is entirely liquid, with small golden pieces floating throughout. This will normally take four hours or less if you've made your pork fat small enough.

*Tip: Save the crunchy solids and add them to cornbread, muffins or stuffing for texture and flavor.

Strain the fat through a coffee filter or several layers of cheesecloth to remove the solids. Press these into the strainer with a wooden spoon to extract as much fat as possible. Cool the pork fat until it solidifies. If there is still a layer of visible sediment at the bottom, reheat it and strain it again. Store the rendered fat in airtight jars or containers in your refrigerator or freezer.

NOTES FROM THE COOK: