

About Nitrates in Meat

Nitrate has been widely used in meats since at least 1925.

It was introduced, not for an insidious reason, but because it is a terrific deterrent to botulism.

Botulism in meat was a big problem before nitrates. Of course, that was before modern refrigeration and freezing also.

Nitrate also fixes a red or pink color in meat.

Meat without nitrate gets a characteristic spoiling meat color within a few days even if safely refrigerated.

Nitrate is not directly the culprit. Some of the nitrate converts more or less naturally to "nitrite."

Nitrite is not actually the health culprit either but when overheated (overcooked or charred) it can produce nitrosamines which are believed to be carcinogenic.

The evidence against nitrates and nitrites is disputed and neither strong nor specific.

The studies that exist indicate a correlation between nitrate processed meats and some cancers.

Those studies do not confirm a cause-and-effect relationship.

I am not saying nitrates are safe. I do not know.

I am just saying nitrate or not is your decision.

Do what you believe is best for yourself and your family.

I will say, do not overcook.

The evidence that overcooking and charring can produce carcinogenic nitrosamines is pretty solid.

Tom