

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## OUR SAUSAGES

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### HOW IS YOUR SAUSAGE REALLY MADE?

Our sausages are made for us at two USDA-inspected meat processing plants. Never fear, they are made with wholesome authentic ingredients that you will recognize. We make our sausages fresh every week from whole muscle cuts, including fresh hams, shank meat, picnic shoulders and, of course, trim. Trim is smaller pieces of meat and fat that are cut away from whole muscles and retail cuts during the fabrication process so they have a consistent “trimmed” or clean look. All of this meat is cut into small pieces and then put through a grinder to achieve the desired consistency and then mixed with salt and spices. For linked sausages, the ground mixture is stuffed into all-natural casings and then hand-tied into six inch links.

### WHAT IS NOT IN YOUR SAUSAGES?

Fillers (e.g., wheat flour or corn starch), additives (e.g., monosodium glutamate or MSG), preservatives (e.g., BHA) or food dyes.

### ARE YOUR SAUSAGES GLUTEN-FREE?

Yes. All of our sausages are made from meat, salt and spices and do not contain gluten, including all forms of wheat. Our spice blends also do not contain gluten or wheat nor are our spice essential oils (extractives) derived using gluten or grains or grain by-products. All of our sausages are made in facilities that do not store known allergens.

### WHAT KIND OF CASINGS DO YOU USE?

Our pork sausages are hand-tied using an all-natural pork casing derived from hog intestines. Our country breakfast sausage “pinky” links are mechanically tied. Our lamb sausages are hand-tied using an all-natural sheep casing derived from sheep intestines.

### DO YOU USE SODIUM NITRATE AND/OR SODIUM NITRITE?

We do not add synthesized sodium nitrate or nitrite to any of our products and thus they are considered “nitrate-free” from a technical and regulatory perspective. That said, to make our bacon and city ham, we use a natural preservative derived from celery juice powder.\* Due to the basic rules of chemistry, products that include celery juice powder do end up containing naturally-occurring nitrate and its derivative, sodium nitrite. We could choose to make our bacon and hams without celery juice powder but they would be gray in color and, quite honestly, not as tasty. We’ve opted for striking a balance between flavor, appearance, and ingredients that speak to our customers’ interests in a more natural product. For a more exhaustive discussion, see: <https://firsthandfoods.com/2017/12/06/nitrate-free-bacon-myth-or-reality/>

*\*Celery juice powder is ground dehydrated celery juice and is more concentrated than celery powder, which is ground dehydrated celery plants.*

## WHICH SPICES DO YOU USE?

We use a variety of different spices, depending on the type of sausage. (See below for a list of ingredients in each sausage). To create our custom sausages, we develop the basic sausage recipe and ingredient list and then work with a wholesale spice manufacturer to refine the recipe and produce the blends for us.

## WHAT ARE NATURAL SPICE EXTRACTIVES?

Spice extractives are the essential oils or concentrated essence of a spice's flavor compounds. Essential oils are used in small amounts to add the desired flavor without having to add larger quantities of the whole herb or spice, which can unfavorably influence a product's texture. The only spice extractives we use are from various peppers (red, black and chili) and oregano.

## HOW ARE SPICE EXTRACTIVES DERIVED?

Spice extractives are derived using either steam or chemical processes. Essential oils are derived using steam. Oleoresins are derived using hexane, a chemical solvent that is then removed using steam and vacuum. As best we understand, these processes do not involve wheat, soy, grains or yeast or other food by-products that are considered allergens.

## WHY IS THERE SUGAR IN SOME OF YOUR SAUSAGES?

Most of our sausages contain a very small amount of sugar. It turns out that a small amount of sugar is a pretty critical ingredient in sausage. It binds with the meat proteins in a way that induces browning and serves as a flavor enhancer to balance the salt. Sugar is typically the second to last ingredient in our spice mix. In other words, there is not as much sugar (by weight) as our spices. For example, each pound of Firsthand Foods' country breakfast sausage contains two-tenths of an ounce of salt, two-tenths of an ounce of spices, and one-tenth of an ounce of sugar. So, it's a really small amount but just enough, in our opinion, to help sausage be sausage.

We understand and appreciate that our customers are concerned about hidden sugars in processed foods. If you still want to refrain from any and all sugar, please try our chorizo sausage and our lamb sausage (merguez) both of which do not contain any sugar. And, of course, our ground pork contains no sugar so you could also consider using it to get creative and make your own sausage!

# SAUSAGE INGREDIENTS

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## ANDOUILLE

Pork, Sea Salt, Spices (including Ground Mustard, Red Pepper, Black Pepper, White Pepper), Dehydrated Onion and Garlic, Celery Powder, Sugar, Parsley Flakes, Natural Spice Extractive\*

## BRATWURST

Pork, Salt, Spices (including Pepper & Ginger), Sugar, Mustard Seed

## CHORIZO

Pork, Vinegar, Spices, Salt, Garlic Powder, Spice Extractives\*\*

## COUNTRY BREAKFAST

Pork, Salt, Spices (including Pepper and Sage), Sugar, Parsley

## KIELBASA

Pork, Dehydrated Garlic, Kosher Salt, Spices, Sugar, Paprika, Natural Smoke Flavor Added

## MERGUEZ

Ground Lamb, Salt, Spices (Including Cumin, Red Pepper, Fennel, Coriander, Cinnamon), Paprika, Dehydrated Garlic and Citric Acid

## SPICY ITALIAN

Pork, Kosher Salt, Spices (including Fennel, Sugar, Paprika, Parsley Flakes, Dehydrated Garlic)

## SWEET ITALIAN

Pork, Salt, Spices (including Fennel, Sugar, Garlic Powder)

*\*Our andouille spice blend contains pepper spice extractives.*

*\*\*Our chorizo spice blend contains pepper and oregano spice extractives.*