

How to Render Animal Fat

Beef fat is called **tallow** and pig fat is called **lard**. Poultry fat is too soft to be used by itself, but it may be used in a ratio of about 10% with tallow or lard. Bear fat may also be used but it must be melted (rendered) quickly after the bear has been killed because bear fat will quickly become rancid. You may also use the fat from farm animals such as sheep or goats, and a variety of wild animals, such as beaver, opossum, raccoon, and groundhog. If there is any lean meat still attached to the fat, cut it off and make sure you only use the fat to make grease.

Melting animal fat is called **rendering**. Rendering should be done outdoors or in a well ventilated area. The smell of melting animal fat will make most people nauseous. Cut the animal fat into small pieces about one-inch cubed and put them into a pot with about 1/8 inch of rainwater and cook over **low to medium heat**. Gradually add the fat to the pot and stir to keep the hot grease and solid pieces of fat circulating. As you stir be sure to scrape the bottom of the pot to prevent any fat from sticking to the bottom and burning. Do not burn the fat or allow it to smoke. If it starts to smoke then you are applying too much heat and you are burning the fat or grease.

One pound of fat will yield about 2¼ cups of grease. Most of the fat will melt into a liquid but some small solid particles will not melt and these are called **cracklings**. After melting the fat, allow it to cool slightly, and then strain it through a clean thin cloth and store it in a sealed container until it is needed. The cracklings will be on the top surface of the straining cloth. Save the delicious cracklings for use in other cooking recipes.

(Note: Raw animal fat can quickly become rancid. Therefore raw animal fat should **not** be saved and then converted into grease at some future date. The best procedure is to render animal fat into grease while the fat is still fresh. Rendered animal fat has a much longer storage life than raw animal fat.)

Measure the amount of used cooking grease (or used cooking oil) and put it into a cook pot. Add an equal amount of water to the cook pot. Measure another one-half the original amount of water and set it aside for later. Add one tablespoon of salt to the cook pot. Bring the mixture to a boil inside the pot. Turn off the heat. Then gradually pour the cold water you previously set aside into the hot mixture.

The mixture will begin to separate into three layers as follows:

1. pure fat on top,
2. fat mixed with impurities in the middle, and
3. water on the bottom.

Carefully ladle the top layer of pure fat into a clean container and save it for future use. Discard the bottom two layers. Label the container with the type of grease that it contains (pork lard, beef tallow, cooking oil, etc.)