Pemmican: Beef, Apple and Tallow Bars



Pemmican is dried meat pounded to a powder and bound with rendered fat. It's one of the oldest trail foods there is, and it packs more calories into less space than almost anything you can make at home. This is the version I make: equal weights of beef powder, apple powder and tallow, with a little honey, salt and apple pie spice. It tastes like a dense apple bar, not like a mouthful of fat.

RATIO	BAR	YIELD
1 : 1 : 1	40 g	36
by weight	about 215 calories	bars per batch

1 lb Beef powder · **1 lb** Apple powder · **1 lb** Beef tallow

Plus a little honey, salt and apple pie spice.

CALORIES
About 215 per bar, about 2,450 per pound

A DAY'S FOOD
9 to 10 bars covers 2,000 calories, about 13 ounces

PROTEIN
About 9 g per bar

BEST STORAGE
Vacuum sealed in the freezer, 2 to 3 years

⚠ **BIGGEST RISKS** Beef that isn't cooked to 160°F before drying, and powders that aren't bone dry

INGREDIENTS

- ☐ **1 lb** Beef powder — weighed after powdering
- ☐ **1 lb** Apple powder — one #10 can of dehydrated apple slices, about 1 lb, powdered
- ☐ **1 lb** Beef tallow — melted and slightly cooled
- ☐ **1/4 cup** Honey
- ☐ **1/2 tsp** Salt
- ☐ **2 tsp** Apple pie spice

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Dehydrator
- Food processor
- Kitchen scale
- Skillet
- Meat thermometer
- A bar mold sized for 40 g bars
- A large mixing bowl

Nutrition estimate

Serving: 1 bar (40 g) · 36 per batch

	Per bar	Whole batch
Calories	**215**	**7,750**
Fat	**14 g**	**510 g**
Saturated fat	7 g	250 g
Protein	**9 g**	**325 g**
Carbohydrates	**14 g**	**500 g**
Sugars	12 g	435 g
Fiber	1.5 g	55 g
Sodium	**about 60 mg**	**about 2,100 mg**

STEPS

1. **Pick the right beef.** Use a lean cut you'd use for jerky, like eye of round or top round. Trim off every bit of visible fat and slice it 1/4 inch thick. Ground beef works, but it doesn't powder as well. Expect to start with about 3 pounds of raw lean beef to end up with 1 pound of powder.
2. THE STEP THAT MAKES THIS SAFE
   Cook it to 160°F first. Pan fry the strips until the thickest piece reads 160°F on a thermometer. A dehydrator doesn't get meat hot enough to kill E. coli, and once meat is dry, bacteria get much harder to kill. Cooking first is the step that makes this safe.
3. **Rinse off the fat.** Rinse the cooked strips under hot water to wash off the surface fat, then pat them dry. Fat left on the meat goes rancid long before anything else in the bar.
4. **Dry until it snaps.** Dehydrate at 145 to 160°F for about 6 hours, or overnight. For pemmican, the meat needs to go past jerky: it should break with a snap, not bend. Any flex means moisture is still in it.
5. **Powder the beef.** Let it cool, then run it through the food processor until it's a fine powder. Weigh out 1 pound.
6. **Powder the apples.** Run the dehydrated apple slices through the food processor until they're a fine powder. Use crunchy slices straight from a freshly opened can. If the can has been open a while and the slices have gone soft, dry them in the dehydrator at 135°F until they snap again.
7. **Warm the tallow.** Melt it, then let it cool until it's warm and still fully liquid. Stir in the honey.
8. **Mix.** In a large bowl, combine the beef powder, apple powder, salt and apple pie spice. Pour in the tallow and honey and mix until every bit of powder is coated and the mix holds together when you squeeze it.
9. **Press the bars.** Pack the mix firmly into the bar mold, 40 g per bar. Press out any air pockets.
10. **Set and unmold.** Chill in the fridge until hard, about an hour, then pop them out.

HOW LONG IT KEEPS

Zip bag, counter	about 1 month
Zip bag, fridge	3 to 6 months
Vacuum sealed, cool and dark	6 to 12 months
Mylar with an oxygen absorber, cool and dark	up to 1 year
Vacuum sealed, fridge	1 to 2 years
Vacuum sealed, freezer	2 to 3 years

Keep it below 70°F, out of light, and away from air.

BEST PRACTICE
Wrap bars in parchment, vacuum seal them in packs of 5 to 10 (a day's food), label with the date, and freeze them. Keep one pack in the fridge or the bag for eating.

SIGNS IT'S GONE BAD
A smell like crayons, old paint or stale nuts. The fat has gone rancid. **Mold, wet spots or a sticky surface.** Moisture got in. **Toss it either way.**

Nutrition: These are estimates based on USDA values for tallow, honey and dried lean beef, and the label on dehydrated apple slices. Your numbers will shift with how lean the beef is and how much fat the rinse takes off.