



Pork Cooking Methods

Many Ways to Make a Delicious Meal

Preparing that Perfect Cut of Pork

Pork is best when cooked to medium doneness, 155°F on a meat thermometer. Correctly cooked pork is juicy and tender, with a slight blush of pink in the center.

- **Dry or Wet?**

- ◆ There are two basic methods for cooking meats: dry heat and moist heat. Generally, dry-heat methods are best applied to naturally tender cuts of meat. Moist-heat methods tenderize less-tender cuts.

- **Dry-Heat Methods**

- ◆ [Grilling](#) - for both small pork cuts cooked over direct heat and large pork cuts cooked with indirect heat
- ◆ [Broiling](#) - for small cuts such as chops, kabobs and pork patties
- ◆ [Sautéing/Stir-Frying](#) - for small pork cuts such as chops, cutlets and strips
- ◆ [Panbroiling](#) - for chops, tenderloin medallions, ham slices, bacon and ground pork patties
- ◆ [Roasting](#) - for large pork cuts - loin roasts, shoulder roasts, ham, leg roasts

- **Moist-Heat Methods**

- ◆ [Stewing](#) - for smaller pieces of less-tender cuts, such as shoulder cubes
- ◆ [Braising](#) - for large or small cuts, but traditionally less-tender cuts



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Cooking Methods

There's no shortage of ways to prepare pork. It's as versatile as it is delicious. Here you'll find information about a few popular methods:

- Grilling and Smoking
- Broiling
- Roasting
- Stewing and Braising

Grilling

There are two ways to grill pork, based on the size of the cut:

- Direct heat, where food is placed directly over the heat source, is ideal for small cuts like kabobs, tenderloin, burgers and chops.
- Indirect heat, where food is placed on the grill rack away from the coals or gas burners, is good for large cuts like loin roasts, ribs, shoulder and fresh ham.

Direct Heat

1. Arrange hot coals evenly on the fire grate of the grill or use all gas burners.
2. Place pork directly above the heat source.
3. Follow suggested cooking times, turning once during cooking.



Indirect Heat

1. Bank hot coals on both sides of the fire grate, on one side of the grill or in a ring around the perimeter. For gas grills, preheat and then turn off any burners directly below where the food will go.
2. Place pork on the grill so it is not directly over any coals or gas burners and close grill hood.
3. Follow suggested cooking times until pork is done. The heat circulates inside the grill, so turning the pork is not necessary.



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Charcoal Grilling

- Using charcoal briquettes, lay the fire with a surface area 10 percent larger than the food being grilled – about 3 inches deep at the center tapering to 1 inch at the edge.
- Start the fire about 30 minutes before you're ready to cook. When ready, the coals will be covered with gray ash. Charcoal chimney starters are an affordable and useful accessory for starting a fire.
- Use a portable oven thermometer placed on the grill (*not* directly over coals) to measure the temperature. Or use a candy thermometer, inserting the probe into the top grill vent opening.
- To regulate the temperature, use the bottom and top vents – opening to increase temperature and closing to decrease it. Be careful not to close the vents completely, or the fire may go out.
- Keep a spray bottle of water nearby to douse unwanted flames.
- After each use, clean the grill rack while still hot with a stiff wire brush.



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Gas Grilling

- Open the lid to light the fire. Check to see that all burner control knobs are turned to “off” and that your fuel tank is full.
- Turn the gas valve on (counter clockwise).
- Follow the manufacturer’s directions to light the grill, using either the igniter switch or a match.
- Close the lid and preheat the grill until the thermometer reaches 500-550 degrees F., about 10 to 15 minutes. To cook, adjust the burner controls for the method you are going to use.
- On a gas grill, after preheating, turn off any burners directly below the food. The burners on both sides of the food should be adjusted to equal amounts of heat (medium or low) as indicated in the recipe. The heat circulates inside the grill, so turning the food is not necessary.
- Combo Cooking – Combo cooking is a combination of the direct and indirect methods. It is used to sear foods before cooking them slowly by the indirect method. Place food directly over coals for a few minutes and then move to the center or other side of the cooking grate to complete cooking. This method is perfect for extra-thick pork chops and larger tenderloins (1-1/2 pounds and larger), which will be nicely browned on the outside, juicy and tender on the inside.



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Ten Tips for the Greatest Grilled Chops

- **Make More of Mustard** – Move mustard from the condiment tray to the center of the plate. A spicy mustard, honey and vinegar mixture makes a wonderful marinade or sauce for pork chops, and dry mustard makes a great rub.
- **Relish the Salsas** – Complete the perfect chop with simple homemade relishes and salsas. Try Artichoke Relish, made from chopped artichoke hearts, tomatoes, chiles, red peppers, olives and basil. Or try a salsa with fruit – like Pineapple-Chipotle Salsa.
- **Spice Up BBQ Sauce** – Spice up your regular barbecue sauce with a splash of hot sauce or horseradish – or, stir in some of your favorite jam or preserves. And be sure to set out extra sauce for dipping.
- **Don't Sauce Too Soon** – Baste with thick or sweet sauces only 5-10 minutes before the chops are done. This prevents burning sugar-based sauces.
- **Marinate in Minutes** – Pork chops absorb the flavor of marinades and rubs in as little as 30 minutes. So don't think for a minute that a quick brush with barbecue sauce is all there is time for on a weeknight. Soak in some flavor.
- **Bag It** – For easy preparation and cleanup with marinades, arrange chops in a resealable plastic bag, pour in marinade, then seal. Refrigerate if you're marinating for more than 30 minutes, turning the bag frequently. Discard leftover marinade.
- **Rub It Right** – Use bold flavors in dry rubs. Pork has a hearty flavor that can handle any combination of herbs and spices. So go beyond sprinkling with salt and pepper – instead play with spices like turmeric, coriander and even cayenne.
- **Chop Your Chop** – A pork chop can be more than a chop; cut in into cubes for kabobs or strips skewered for a sate.
- **Don't Overdo** – Remember, chops will have a slight blush of pink in the center when they are done. To be sure that you cook them perfectly to medium doneness, use a meat thermometer and cook to 160 degrees F.
- **Get a Head Start** – Make an extra chop or two for sandwiches or salad toppers the next day. A thinly sliced grilled pork chop topped with your favorite barbecue sauce, then served on a hoagie bun, will fast become a summertime family favorite. And you can keep your kitchen cool with a summer salad that includes cubes of chilled, grilled chop.



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Rib Tips

A Cut Above The Rest: Pork ribs are a summer grilling staple – and the perfect menu choice for a backyard barbecue. Perplexed about the different types of pork ribs in the supermarket? Pork ribs vary in size and amount of meat depending on where they come from on the hog. All pork ribs offer great barbecue possibilities, so choose ribs that you and your family will enjoy.

Rub It In

Dry rubs are a mixture of herbs and spices that are applied to the meat's surface and are a great alternative to “spice” up any rack of ribs. Spices with bold flavor like rosemary, cumin, coriander and cayenne work best for dry rubs. Combining with the meat's natural juices, rubs work as a “dry” marinade. Rubs can be applied just before grilling or the night before cooking. Keep ribs refrigerated until ready to grill.

Get Saucy!

Whether you prefer a sauce that's thin, tangy and vinegar-based or thick, smoky and tomato-based, barbecue sauce is a classic way to season pork ribs. For best results, brush ribs generously only during the last 30 minutes of grilling, which helps prevent burning caused by sugar-based sauces. Always prepare extra sauce and set aside in individual servings for those who like to dip their ribs while eating.

Love Them Tender...

For extra tender pork ribs, remove ribs from the grill when fully cooked and wrap in heavy aluminum foil. Place foil-wrapped ribs in brown paper bags, close and set aside for up to an hour. Unwrap ribs, cut into serving pieces and serve with sauce.



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Guidelines for Smoke-Cooking in a Covered Grill

Smoking can be accomplished in any covered grill by using indirect heat and adding wood chips or chunks to the fire. Follow these guidelines to enjoy this slow, meditative art and the delicious results:

- At least two hours before you plan to start cooking, soak wood chips or chunks in water. Estimate two chunks or a good handful of chips for each hour of cooking time. Any leftover soaked wood can be left to dry for use the next time you smoke.
- Follow the directions for indirect cooking for either a gas or charcoal grill.
- Once the grill is ready, place a good handful of chips or two chunks of wood directly on the hot coals in a charcoal grill. In a gas grill, place the wood chips or chunks in the grill's smoking compartment or on a piece of aluminum foil placed on top of the lava rocks or metal bars (underneath the cooking grate). Place the cooking grate on the grill and place the food over the pan of water, away from the fire source. Cover the grill.
- If your grill does not have a built-in thermometer, place an oven thermometer on the grill close to the food (not directly over the fire). Or place a candy thermometer on top of the grill with the probe placed through a vent. Maintain a temperature of about 225-250 degrees F. If the temperature rises above 250 degrees F., either turn down the gas burners or partially close the vents in the charcoal grill, monitoring the heat and reopening the vent as the temperature drops.
- When smoking food that takes more than an hour on a charcoal grill (such as a pork shoulder or ribs), you will need to add more charcoal to the fire to maintain heat. Start a supplemental bed of charcoal in a small grill nearby or in your chimney starter about 30-40 minutes after you have started cooking. This will ensure a steady supply of hot coals. For a very long cooking period (6-8 hours), add three to four new charcoal briquettes to the supplemental fire about every 40 minutes.
- Watch for smoke escaping from the grill. As it slows down or stops, add more wood to the fire. When adding wood or charcoal, work quickly with long-handled tongs. Each time you take the lid off the grill, it will add 10-15 minutes extra cooking time.

Broiling & Sautéing

Broiling

1. Place pork on preheated broiler pan so it is three to five inches from the heat source.
2. Broil until the pork is brown on one side; turn and broil the other side until brown.
3. Season as desired.



Sautéing

1. Heat a small amount of oil in a large heavy skillet over a medium-high heat.
2. Place pork in skillet; do not cover.
3. Cook pork uncovered, turning occasionally. For stir-frying, cook over high heat, stirring constantly.



Pan broiling

1. Preheat heavy skillet over medium-high heat.
2. Place meat in hot skillet (if pork is extremely lean, brush pan with a little oil to prevent sticking). Do not cover.
3. Cook over medium-high heat, turning occasionally, until evenly browned on both sides. Remove any fat and drippings as they accumulate.



Roasting

Roasting

1. Preheat oven to 325 to 350°F (for pork tenderloin, roast at 450°F).
2. Trim much of the exterior fat from the roast; if roast has no fat cover, rub the surface with 1 to 2 teaspoons of oil. Season roast with herbs and other seasonings, if desired.
3. Place roast on rack in shallow roasting pan.
4. Do not cover; place in oven and roast to an internal temperature of 150 to 155°F for medium doneness.
5. Remove roast from oven. Allow it to "rest" for 10 to 15 minutes before slicing. This resting period allows juices to redistribute. Internal temperature will rise approximately another 5°F.



Stewing & Braising

Stewing

1. Season meat, if desired.
2. In large, heavy skillet with lid, brown meat on all sides in a small amount of oil; remove excess drippings from pan.
3. Add a small amount of liquid and cover pan tightly.
4. Simmer over low heat on the stove or in a low to moderate (275 to 300°F) oven.



Braising

1. Coat meat lightly with seasoned flour, if desired.
2. In a large, heavy pan with lid, brown meat on all sides in a small amount of oil; remove excess drippings from pan.
3. Cover meat with desired liquid(s).
4. Cover pan and simmer over low heat on stove or in a low to moderate (275 to 300°F) oven for 1 to 3 hours, until tender.
5. If adding vegetables, add toward end of cooking time, during the last 20 to 45 minutes.



Pork. Delicious in So Many Ways.

So tasty. So versatile. Try some new methods of preparing pork.
The possibilities are endless!

