

How to Make Moist, Tender Pork Chops

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When I told my mother-in-law that I was writing for the National Pork Board, the first thing she said was, "Oh, good! Now you can tell me how to make pork chops so that they're not all dried out."

Well, actually, my friend, renowned chef and author Ron Oliver of San Diego's [The Marine Room](#) ^[1] is going to tell all of us how to make moist, tender pork chops. We talked chops recently, and here's what he had to say:

1. **Don't overcook them.** Most home cooks, who have been following grandma's advice, overcook their pork chops. [According to the new USDA guidelines, pork chops, roasts, and tenderloins can safely be cooked to medium-rare at 145 degrees, not 160](#) ^[2], followed by a 3-minute rest period. Keep in mind that the 15 degree difference will yield a finished product that is likely moister and pinker than you may be used to which is perfectly safe.

2. **Choose quality pork.** Oliver likes heirloom pigs such as Berkshires because they are genetically predisposed to be juicy and flavorful. He also suggests buying meat that has not been frozen. Berkshire pork can be found at specialty meat markets, independent butchers, and Whole Foods stores. For more consumer tips on Berkshire pork, check out [americanberkshire.com](#) ^[3].

3. **Marinate or brine the meat before cooking. Thinner chops, say less than 3/4-inch- thick, should be marinated and cooked like a steak, over high heat and quickly.** For a fast and easy marinade, buy a salad dressing, like an Italian vinaigrette and marinate the chops for 30 to 60 minutes in the refrigerator before grilling or searing. A trick Oliver uses it to make a pesto mayonnaise (equal parts of each) and spread a thin layer on the chops, then place them directly on the grill. He says the mayonnaise acts as both a lubricant and a marinade, and caramelizes nicely on the grill. **THICK CHOPS, say 1-inch and bigger, should be brined and cooked longer.** Oliver says to use about 1/2 cup kosher or sea salt and 1/2 cup brown sugar, maple, or honey for 1 quart of liquid such as apple cider; other liquids such as water, pomegranate juice, or a combination of fruit juices works well too. Brine for 2 to 4 hours in the refrigerator.. Chops can be grilled, baked in the oven, or cooked on the stove top. Oliver prefers to place the chops on a very hot grill until nicely seared, then turn the heat down to medium, and cook them slowly until the desired doneness is reached.

So there you have it: Three simple steps to making moist, tender pork chops. If you've got your own tips or questions, please share them below.

For more information about Chef Ron Oliver, please visit his blog, [Chef Ron](#) ^[4], where you can find inspired recipes such as his [Big, Fat Pork Chops with Summer Plum Compot](#) ^[5], and purchase a copy of his award-winning cookbook, *Flying Pans, Two Chefs One World*, co-written with [Executive Chef Bernard Guillas](#) ^[1] of The Marine Room.

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[1] The Marine Room: <http://www.marineroom.com/Chefs?ssid=212202>

[2] According to the new USDA guidelines, pork chops, roasts, and tenderloins can safely be cooked to medium-rare at 145 degrees, not. 160: <http://www.porkretail.org/Trends/348/Pork145Campaign.aspx>

[3] americanberkshire.com:

http://www.americanberkshire.com/Consumers/News%20and%20Info/News%20and%20Info%20Home_page.htm

[4] Chef Ron: <http://www.chefronoliver.com/>

[5] Big, Fat Pork Chops with Summer Plum Compot: <http://www.chefronoliver.com/subSubCategory.aspx?SubSubCategoryID=40>

[6] StuartWebster: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/stuartwebster/5829527553/>

[7] Image: <http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php>