

Cinnamon Brined Grilled Pork Chops

Thinly-cut pork chops can dry out quickly—it's one of the reasons many of us grow up thinking pork is too dry. (Not that I ever did... don't read this part, Mom.) But these thin chops can be a juicy and inexpensive dinner if you know how to cook them properly. You'll be able to save money and still serve a dish that tastes like a million bucks.

Brining the chops adds moisture and ensures that the meat you serve will have people drooling instead of reaching for their water. The best part? The brine trick works on more than pork. Use it on everything from red meat to poultry for moist, delicious meals.

There's also a hidden benefit to this recipe: Preparing this brine makes your house smell amazing. Think of the money you'll save on potpourri!

Ingredients:

Brine (listed below)

8 thin cut bone in pork chops, 1/2 to 3/4 inch cuts

Directions:

1. Prepare brine as described below and let cool to room temperature.
 2. While brine cools, use a jaccard to pierce the entire surface of both sides of the pork chops. If you don't have a jaccard don't run out and buy one for this, you can use a fork and just do a thorough job of piercing the meat so that the brine can penetrate. It will take a bit longer but a fork will get the job done for sure.
 3. Pour room temperature brine into large container, add pork chops so they are completely covered and place in refrigerator for 24 hours.
 4. After pork has brined, light grill and setup for high direct heat.
 5. Remove chops from brine and dab dry with a paper towel.
- *This step is important because we are searing these chops hot and fast over direct heat. Any surface moisture will impede the searing process and the meat won't actually sear until the brine evaporates causing the pork to steam in the process – not good!
6. Place chops over screaming hot coals with grill grate as close to coals as possible. If using a gas grill, preheat for as long as needed in order to get grate as hot as possible.
 7. After grilling for 90 seconds, turn chops 90° and sear for an additional 90 seconds. Flip chops and repeat.

8. Depending the thickness of the chops they should be done at this point but remember to always use a dependable meat thermometer to check internal temperature of the pork chops for doneness. I recommend taking them off the grill at 140° F as the carry over cooking during the rest will put them at a safe eating temperature as recommended by the USDA.
 9. Let chops rest 5 minutes, plate and serve.
-

Apple Cinnamon Brine

If your childhood was anything like mine you grew up eating pork chops that could also double as replacement soles for your worn out sneakers. To be fair, back then the USDA recommended cooking whole cuts of pork to 160° F to be safe. To each their own, but for most of us a pork chop cooked to 160° internal temperature is, in a word...inedible. Luckily, the safe temperature for pork chops has since been updated to 145° F (ground pork still remains at 160°) and at that temperature a high end quality cut of pork is very juicy. For those that don't have the budget for \$50.00 per pound Kurobuta pork chops, this brine will make any grocery store \$2.00 per pound chop taste like a million bucks.

Ingredients:

6 cups water

3 cups apple cider or apple juice

2 cups sugar

6 cinnamon sticks

2 TBS black peppercorns

1 TBS whole cloves

1 TBS salt

2 bay leaves

Zest of one orange

Directions:

1. Combine water and apple cider in large stock pot and bring to rolling boil.
2. Add remaining brine ingredients, reduce heat to medium, cover and let boil for 10 minutes.
3. Remove from heat and allow to cool (covered) to room temperature.
4. Strain the brine into suitable container.

Tip* This is excellent for pork chops but don't stop there. Try it with pork ribs, whole chickens and Cornish hens.