

The Juicy Secret to Pork

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If there's one thing I hear repeatedly when people talk about cooking pork at home, it's this: "*My pork chops always turn out dry.*" The truth is, pork is one of the easiest meats to overcook, but it's also one of the easiest to fix with a few small adjustments chefs rely on every day.

We've talked previously about the importance of using a digital instant read thermometer to get your pork to the proper temperature – 145 F for pork chops. In addition, here's the simple method I teach my culinary students to make chops that stay tender, flavorful and juicy.

1. Start with a quick brine.

A basic brine - water, salt, and a little sugar - works like magic. Even 30 minutes in brine makes a noticeable difference. The brine seasons the meat all the way through and helps it hold moisture during cooking. Don't over brine; more than 12 hours in brine can result in mushy meat.

2. Sear with confidence.

Heat your pan until it's good and hot before the chops go in. That initial sizzle builds a caramelized crust that locks in flavor. Don't move them around too much; let each side develop color (and flavorful crust) before flipping.

3. Pull early and rest well.

Today's pork is best when cooked to 145 F with a short rest. Those five minutes off the heat allow the juices to redistribute through the coagulated meat proteins instead of running onto the cutting board.

If you want to try this method tonight, here's a good seasonal and simple recipe:

Maple-Brined Pork Chops (Wisconsin Style)

Whisk 4 cups water with ¼ cup kosher salt, 2 tablespoons brown sugar, and 1 tablespoon maple syrup. Brine 2 thick-cut chops for 30 -60 minutes, pat dry, then sear in a hot skillet with a little oil. Finish in a 375 F oven until they reach 145 F. Add a splash of stock and a sprig of rosemary to the pan for a quick sauce. Mount with a pat of butter.

Simple steps with big flavor payoff. And once you taste a truly juicy pork chop, you'll never go back.

Enjoy!