

Red Wine-Braised Pork Chops

From America's Test Kitchen episode: *Pork Chops and Lentil Salad*.

Serves 4

Look for chops with a small eye and a large amount of marbling, as these are the best suited to braising. The pork scraps can be removed when straining the sauce in step 4 and served alongside the chops. (They taste great.)

INGREDIENTS

Salt and pepper

4 (10- to 12-ounce) bone-in pork blade chops, 1 inch thick

2 teaspoons vegetable oil

2 onions, halved and sliced thin

5 sprigs fresh thyme plus 1/4 teaspoon minced

2 garlic cloves, peeled

2 bay leaves

1 (1/2-inch) piece ginger, peeled and crushed

1/8 teaspoon ground allspice

1/2 cup red wine

1/4 cup ruby port

2 tablespoons plus 1/2 teaspoon red wine vinegar

1 cup low-sodium chicken broth

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Dissolve 3 tablespoons salt in 1½ quarts cold water in large container.

Submerge chops in brine, cover, and refrigerate for 30 minutes to 1 hour.

2. Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 275 degrees. Remove chops from brine and pat dry with paper towels. Trim off meat cap and any fat and cartilage opposite rib bones. Cut trimmings into 1-inch pieces. Heat oil in Dutch oven over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add trimmings and brown on all sides, 6 to 9 minutes.

3. Reduce heat to medium and add onions, thyme sprigs, garlic, bay leaves, ginger, and allspice. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onions are golden brown, 5 to 10 minutes. Stir in wine, port, and 2 tablespoons vinegar and cook until reduced to thin syrup, 5 to 7 minutes. Add chicken broth, spread onions and pork scraps into even layer, and bring to simmer. Arrange pork chops on top of pork scraps and onions.

4. Cover, transfer to oven, and cook until meat is tender, 1¼ to 1½ hours. Remove from oven and let chops rest in pot, covered, 30 minutes. Transfer chops to serving platter and tent with aluminum foil. Pour braising liquid through fine-mesh strainer set over large bowl; discard solids. Transfer braising liquid to fat separator and let stand for 5 minutes.

5. Wipe out now-empty pot with wad of paper towels. Return defatted braising liquid to pot and cook over medium-high heat until reduced to 1 cup, 3 to 7 minutes. Off heat, whisk in butter, minced thyme, and remaining ½ teaspoon vinegar. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Pour sauce over chops, sprinkle with parsley, and serve.

TECHNIQUE

HOW A QUICK TRIM AND A LITTLE WINE ADD UP TO BIG FLAVOR SEAR TRIMMINGS

The trimmed scraps from blade chops contain lots of fat and (in some cases) cartilage. Searing them builds so much flavorful browning that searing the chops themselves isn't necessary.



BROWN ONIONS

To build complex flavor, sauté the onions in the rendered pork fat until golden brown with garlic, thyme, bay leaves, ginger, and allspice.



DEGLAZE

To add acidity, sweetness, and complexity to the braising liquid, deglaze the pot with a combination of red wine, ruby port, and red wine vinegar.



USE TRIMMINGS

Laying the chops on top of the trimmings raises them well above the liquid, where they will cook more gently and retain their flavorful juices.



TECHNIQUE

TRIM YOUR CHOPS

The band of fatty connective tissue and shoulder meat along the outer edge of blade chops contributes body and flavor to the braise—but it also causes the chops to buckle. To cut out the structural issues without sacrificing flavor, we

trim away the band, chop it up, and save the pieces for searing.

ON THE CHOPPING BLOCK

Trim off the swath of fatty meat and any cartilage running along the edge of the chop. Cut the scraps into 1-inch pieces.



America's Test Kitchen is a 2,500-square-foot kitchen located just outside of Boston. It is the home of *Cook's Country* and *Cook's Illustrated* magazines and is the workday destination for more than three dozen test cooks, editors, and cookware specialists. Our mission is to test recipes until we understand how and why they work and arrive at the best version. We also test kitchen equipment and supermarket ingredients in search of brands that offer the best value and performance. You can watch us work by tuning in to *America's Test Kitchen* (www.americastestkitchen.com) on public television.