



Garlic-Lime Grilled Pork Tenderloin Steaks

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 15: Spicing Up the Backyard Barbecue

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

Thin pork medallions are tricky to cook well on the grill. We ditched the traditional shape in favor of pork tenderloin “steaks” by cutting tenderloins in half and pounding them to 3/4 inch thick. This simple step increased their surface area for a better ratio of browned exterior to tender interior. We also cut thin slashes in the steaks to promote better penetration of a garlic-citrus marinade that includes honey for better browning and fish sauce for meatiness. Finally we left excess marinade on the steaks to help keep their exteriors from drying out on the grill and then thickened some reserved marinade with mayonnaise for a bold finishing sauce.

Serves 4 to 6

Since marinating is a key step in this recipe, we don’t recommend using enhanced pork.

INGREDIENTS

- 2** (1-pound) pork tenderloins, trimmed
- 1** tablespoon grated lime zest plus 1/4 cup juice (2 limes)
- 4** garlic cloves, minced
- 4** teaspoons honey
- 2** teaspoons fish sauce
- 3/4** teaspoon salt
- 1/2** teaspoon pepper
- 1/2** cup vegetable oil
- 4** teaspoons mayonnaise
- 1** tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
- Flake sea salt (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Slice each tenderloin in half crosswise to create 4 steaks total. Pound each half to 3/4-inch thickness. Using sharp knife, cut 1/8-inch-deep slits spaced 1/2 inch apart in crosshatch pattern on both sides of steaks.

2. Whisk lime zest and juice, garlic, honey, fish sauce, salt, and pepper together in large bowl. Whisking constantly, slowly drizzle oil into lime mixture until smooth and slightly thickened. Transfer 1/2 cup lime mixture to small bowl and whisk in mayonnaise; set aside sauce. Add steaks to bowl with remaining marinade and toss thoroughly to coat; transfer steaks and marinade to large zipper-lock bag, press out as much air as possible, and seal bag. Let steaks sit at room temperature for 45 minutes.

3A. FOR A CHARCOAL GRILL: Open bottom vent completely. Light large chimney starter filled with charcoal briquettes (6 quarts). When top coals are partially covered with ash, pour evenly over half of grill. Set cooking grate in

place, cover, and open lid vent completely. Heat grill until hot, about 5 minutes.

3B. FOR A GAS GRILL: Turn all burners to high, cover, and heat grill until hot, about 15 minutes. Leave primary burner on high and turn off other burner(s).

4. Clean and oil cooking grate. Remove steaks from marinade (do not pat dry) and place over hotter part of grill. Cook, uncovered, until well browned on first side, 3 to 4 minutes. Flip steaks and cook until well browned on second side, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer steaks to cooler part of grill, with wider end of each steak facing hotter part of grill. Cover and cook until meat registers 140 degrees, 3 to 8 minutes longer (remove steaks as they come to temperature). Transfer steaks to carving board and let rest for 5 minutes.

5. While steaks rest, microwave reserved sauce until warm, 15 to 30 seconds; stir in cilantro. Slice steaks against grain into 1/2-inch-thick slices. Drizzle with half of sauce; sprinkle with sea salt, if using; and serve, passing remaining sauce separately.

TECHNIQUE

MAYO MAKES IT A SAUCE

To add a last-minute burst of flavor to our Garlic-Lime Grilled Pork Tenderloin Steaks, we reserve a portion of the garlic-citrus marinade to use as a sauce. But pouring the punchy liquid over the steaks resulted in a too-sharp taste; plus, its consistency was thin and runny. Adding mayonnaise solved both problems. A few teaspoons balanced the marinade's sharp acidity and contributed much-needed body.



TECHNIQUE

THE GEOMETRY OF POUNDING PORK

Cylindrical pork tenderloin doesn't have much surface area for browning. Pounding the roast into a flat steak seemed like an obvious way to increase the amount of meat that comes in contact with the grill—and as a result, the flavor in every bite—but we didn't realize how significant the difference actually was until we did the math. Flattening a cylindrical piece of pork tenderloin into a 3/4-inch rectangular steak increased its surface area by almost 30 percent.

CYLINDRICAL TENDERLOIN

VOLUME: 250 ml

SURFACE AREA: 172.7 sq cm



POUNDED STEAK

VOLUME: 250 ml

SURFACE AREA: 220 sq cm



