

COOK'S

ILLUSTRATED

CRUNCHY BAKED PORK CHOPS

Serves 4. Published January 1, 2008. From Cook's Illustrated.

This recipe was developed using natural pork, but enhanced pork (injected with a salt solution) will work as well. If using enhanced pork, eliminate the brining in step 1 (see related How To Cook). The bread crumb mixture can be prepared through step 2 up to 3 days in advance. The breaded chops can be frozen for up to 1 week. They don't need to be thawed before baking; simply increase the cooking time in step 5 to 35 to 40 minutes.

INGREDIENTS

Table salt

- 4** center-cut boneless pork chops , 6 to 8 ounces each, 3/4 to 1 inch thick, trimmed of excess fat
- 4** slices hearty white sandwich bread , torn into 1-inch pieces
- 1** small minced shallot (about 2 tablespoons)
- 3** medium garlic cloves , minced or pressed through garlic press (about 1 tablespoon)
- 2** tablespoons vegetable oil
- Ground black pepper
- 2** tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/2** teaspoon minced fresh thyme leaves
- 2** tablespoons minced fresh parsley leaves
- 1/4** cup unbleached all-purpose flour plus 6 tablespoons
- 3** large egg whites
- 3** tablespoons Dijon mustard

Lemon wedges

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** 1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Dissolve 1/4 cup salt in 1 quart water in medium container or gallon-sized zipper-lock bag. Submerge chops, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate 30 minutes. Rinse chops under cold water and dry thoroughly with paper towels.
- 2.** 2. Meanwhile, pulse bread in food processor until coarsely ground, about eight 1-second pulses (you should have about 3 1/2 cups crumbs). Transfer crumbs to rimmed baking sheet and add shallot, garlic, oil, 1/4 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Toss until crumbs are evenly coated with oil. Bake until deep golden brown and dry, about 15 minutes, stirring twice during baking time. (Do not turn off oven.) Cool to room temperature. Toss crumbs with Parmesan, thyme, and parsley.
- 3.** 3. Place 1/4 cup flour in pie plate. In second pie plate, whisk egg whites and mustard until combined; add remaining 6 tablespoons flour and whisk until almost smooth, with pea-sized lumps remaining.
- 4.** 4. Increase oven temperature to 425 degrees. Spray wire rack with nonstick cooking spray and place in rimmed baking sheet. Season chops with pepper. Dredge 1 pork chop in flour; shake off excess. Using tongs, coat with egg mixture; let excess drip off. Coat all sides of chop with bread crumb mixture, pressing gently so that thick layer of crumbs adheres to chop. Transfer breaded chop to wire rack. Repeat with remaining 3 chops.
- 5.** 5. Bake until instant-read thermometer inserted into center of chops registers 150 degrees, 17 to 25 minutes. Let rest on rack 5 minutes before serving with lemon wedges.

RECIPE TESTING

Coatings without the Crunch



Patchy: The crust peels off chops dipped in a typical thin egg wash.



Thin: This popular boxed mix gives chops an insubstantial, bland crust.



Crumbly: Fresh, untoasted crumbs have trouble sticking to the chop.

TECHNIQUE

Secrets to a Crisp Coating



1. Dip: A thick batter of flour, mustard, and egg whites grips the bread crumbs like glue.



2. Coat: Coating the chops with fresh, well-toasted bread crumbs results in a crust with flavor and crunch.



3. Elevate: Baking the chops on a rack set in a baking sheet allows greater air circulation and prevents the bottoms from turning soggy.



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