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Three Ways to Cook Pork

Festive and flavorful, nutrient-rich tenderloin is as lean as chicken breast



recipe
RX

If the word “pork” brings to mind fatty indulgences like bacon and ham, think again. Pork tenderloin is a surprisingly healthy option. “The beauty of pork is that over the years farmers have bred it to be leaner and leaner,” says Debra Krummel, PhD, RD, endowed professor of nutrition at the University of Cincinnati. “You can now find pork that is just as lean as chicken breast.”

As the leanest part of the pig, pork tenderloin has very little saturated fat and therefore won't affect your blood cholesterol levels significantly, Krummel says. Pork is also one of the richest food sources of thiamin, a B vitamin that helps the body produce energy from food, and a good source of zinc, a mineral needed for immune system function. And it might help keep hunger at bay. A recent Australian study found that when people ate pork, their bodies produced more of an appetite-suppressing hormone known as PYY than when they ate chicken.

Pork tenderloin is versatile, equally at home at the center of an elegant dinner or at a tailgate party. But because it's so lean, prepare it with care. “I think some people get turned off because they overcook it, or they don't marinate, or they don't use a moist cooking method, and then it tastes like shoe leather,” Krummel says. She recommends using an instant-read thermometer and cooking the meat just until the internal temperature reaches 160°F, a surefire way to keep the tender in your tenderloin.—Erin O'Donnell

Pork tenderloin has very little saturated fat and won't affect your blood cholesterol levels significantly.



Pork Tenderloin Pantry Picks

Our three pork tenderloin recipes, on the opposite page, feature healthy ingredients that deserve a permanent home in your fridge and pantry. Carolyn O'Neil, MS, RD, co-author of *The Dish on Eating Healthy and Being Fabulous!*, offers a closer look at some top cooking staples.



BRINE TIME

The unopened flower buds of a Mediterranean plant, capers provide a powerful dose of antioxidants. Researchers from the University of Palermo found the antioxidants in capers neutralized harmful compounds formed during the digestion of fats in meat. (Digestion oxidizes fats, creating byproducts that may contribute to heart disease and cancer.) Capers are sold pickled in brine or packed in salt. Give both types a rinse to reduce their sodium content before adding them to dishes. O'Neil recommends **Reese** and **Crosse and Blackwell** brands, which are brined and readily available in many supermarkets.

WHEAT TREAT

Whole-wheat pitas are a tasty way to sneak more whole grains into your diet and get more potential protection against heart disease and diabetes. But it's important to read labels closely to ensure that you're getting the real thing. Look for brands that list "100% whole wheat" on the label, such as **Kangaroo Salad Pockets**, **Toufayan Bakeries Pitettes**, and **Flatout Artisan 5 Grain Flax Fold It Flatbread**.

MAIN SQUEEZE

Lemon juice offers a hefty dose of vitamin C and potent antioxidant compounds known as limonoids, which research suggests may fight mouth, skin, and lung cancers. And because it lends dishes a tart kick, lemon juice can be a substitute for salt. O'Neil prefers the bright flavor of freshly squeezed lemons, but in a pinch, she suggests stocking your fridge with the lemon juice from **Sunkist** and **ReaLemon**, or **Sicilia**, an Italian brand some supermarkets carry.

LOW SAT FAT

O'Neil keeps canola oil in her pantry because of its impressive fat profile: It contains the least saturated fat of popular cooking oils and provides heart-healthy monounsaturated and omega-3 fats. It also stands up to medium-high temperatures, making it a good choice for sautéing, and its subtle flavor doesn't overpower foods. Her favorites include **Wesson** and **Pompeian OlivExtra**, a blend of canola and extra-virgin olive oil.

CUMIN ON IN

This peppery spice, a staple of Mexican and Indian cuisine, is a decent source of iron and aids digestion, possibly by stimulating the release of pancreatic enzymes. O'Neil uses **McCormick** and **Spice Islands** cumin, readily available in most grocery stores. She recommends keeping spices in a cabinet away from heat and light and using them within six to nine months for best flavor.—E.O.



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TED MORRISON



healthy recipe

→ Pork Piccata

This simple but elegant recipe takes pork tenderloin on a trip to Tuscany with the classic Italian flavors of olive oil, lemon, and capers.

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients

- 1 whole pork tenderloin, about 1 lb
- 3 tbsp flour
- 2 tsp lemon pepper
- 2 tsp olive oil
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 4 to 6 slices lemon, very thin
- 4 tbsp capers, drained

Directions

1. Slice tenderloin into 8 equal pieces. Place pieces between sheets of plastic wrap; pound each piece to 1/8-inch thickness with a meat mallet or rolling pin.
2. Dust cutlets lightly with flour and sprinkle with lemon pepper.
3. Add olive oil to nonstick pan over medium-high heat. Quickly sauté cutlets, about 4 minutes per side, or until golden brown.
4. Add wine and lemon juice to skillet; shake pan gently and cook 2 minutes, until sauce is slightly thickened.
5. Garnish with lemon slices and capers and serve.

Per serving: 194 calories, 24 g protein, 6 g carbohydrate, 6 g fat (2 g saturated fat), 73 mg cholesterol, 311 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 29%.



healthy recipe

→ Pork Tenderloin Mango Pitas

Pork in pita pockets is a natural for a lunchbox treat or simple weeknight dinner. Packed with healthy veggies, the exotic taste of mango, and a kick of salsa, they are filling on their own but are great with a salad or bowl of soup.

Makes 6 servings

Ingredients

- 1 whole pork tenderloin, about 1 lb
- cooking spray
- 1 red pepper, coarsely chopped
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 cups shredded cabbage
- ½ cup shredded carrots
- 1 jalapeño pepper, minced (optional)
- 1 mango, peeled, sliced
- 6 (4-inch) whole-wheat pita pockets, warmed
- 6 tbsp salsa

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 450°F. Spray ovenproof nonstick skillet with cooking spray and heat over medium-high heat.
2. Add pork to skillet and sear 2 to 3 minutes per side until brown.
3. Transfer to oven and roast 15 to 18 minutes until meat thermometer reaches 160°F.
4. Remove from oven, and let rest 5 minutes. Slice into bite-size pieces.
5. Place pork, fruit, and vegetables into pita pockets and top with salsa.

Per serving: 232 calories, 21 g protein, 30 g carbohydrate, 4 g fat (1 g saturated fat), 49 mg cholesterol, 5 g fiber, 8 g sugar, 315 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 15%.



healthy recipe

→ Pork Tenderloin With Spicy Rub

The combination of ingredients in this rub delivers a lively flavor with very little salt. Serve the pork tenderloin with long-grain brown rice and a tossed green salad.

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients

- 1 whole pork tenderloin, about 1 lb
- 1 tbsp smoked paprika
- ½ tsp salt
- 1½ tsp brown sugar
- 1½ tsp sugar
- 1½ tsp chili powder
- 1½ tsp ground cumin
- 1½ tsp black pepper

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Make the spice rub: In small bowl, thoroughly combine paprika, salt, brown sugar, sugar, chili powder, ground cumin, and black pepper.
3. Rub enough of the mixture on the tenderloin to lightly coat the entire surface. Store remaining spice rub in a sealed container for future use.
4. Place tenderloin in shallow pan and roast 30 to 35 minutes, or until a meat thermometer inserted in the thickest part registers 160°F.
5. Remove pork from oven and let rest 5 minutes. Slice tenderloin and serve.

Per serving: 147 calories, 23 g protein, 3 g carbohydrate, 36 g fat (4 g saturated fat), 73 mg cholesterol, 3 g sugar, 349 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 24%.

FROM LEFT: KELLER & KELLER PHOTOGRAPHY/ISTOCK/FOOD; WESTERMANN/ISTOCK/FOOD; LEW ROBERTSON/ISTOCK/FOOD

Find more healthy **pork tenderloin recipes.**



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