



Dry-brined Pork Chops in Black Cherry Sauce

Serves 2-4 people or 2 people with leftovers

Ingredients:

(2) 10+ oz, at least 1 inch thick, center cut porterhouse or T-bone pork chops, bone-in

Herb blend of choice (my go to is the Tea and Spice Exchange's Lamb and Pork spice mix)

Course ground kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 TB fruity extra virgin olive oil (we love Trader Joe's Greek olive oil)

2 TB neutral oil

2 TB softened butter, unsalted

¼ cup finely chopped shallots (about 2 medium shallots)

2 TB Dry Ruby Port Wine (if available, use brandy if not)

½ cup dry red wine: Syrah, Brouilly, a nice fruity red blend, or Chianti are all good choices

½ cup rich chicken stock

½ teaspoon Veal Demi-glace or ½ tsp tomato paste

1 cup ripe black cherries, stems and pits removed

Method:

1. Pat pork chops very dry with paper towels. Sprinkle all over with salt and pepper—be sure to season the ends, sides, and bones. Press spice in. Now sprinkle generously with the spice mix and press to adhere. Place chops on a rack in a sheet pan and place uncovered in the refrigerator for 2 days to dry-brine. Flip over on the morning of the second day. The chops will hydrate the spices, pulling in the flavor as they dry.
2. 1 hour before cooking, rub the chops with the tablespoon of olive oil and sit on counter to come to room temperature.
3. Heat an iron skillet or heavy bottomed sauté pan over medium high heat. When a droplet of water bounces on the surface and evaporates quickly, place chops in the pan. Turn heat down slightly if you think the pan will burn before it evenly sears the meat—no more than 2 minutes. Turn the chops and sear the other side. Now, working carefully so as not to burn yourself (those long grill tongs you have are great to use here), stand the chops on their fatty and bony edges, moving them around so that all sides are seared.
4. Place chops on an oven proof platter or dish to rest for 10 minutes so that the juices stay in the meat.
5. Preheat your oven to 275 F.
6. When you are ready to finish cooking the meat, place the dish with the chops into the oven and set your timer for 5 minutes.
7. When the timer goes off, check the internal temp of the chops or use the finger test. You want the meat at 145 to 150 F. When pressed with your finger, it should resist but give a little---not be

completely firm. Remove pan from oven. Place chops on a cutting board, tent loosely with foil and allow meat to rest for 10 minutes before carving.

8. Blot out excess oil or charred pieces from the pan you used to sauté the chops. Place over low heat and add the neutral oil and the shallots. Cook shallots until soft and turning translucent. Do not brown.
9. Add cherries to the shallots, cover and cook until cherries release some of their juice. Add port wine to the pan and reduce. If using brandy, add the brandy and light the sauce, shaking the pan to flavor the cherries. Cook until flame subsides. Add the red wine and reduce by $\frac{1}{2}$. Add the chicken stock and the demi-glace or tomato paste and reduce by at least half until the cherries are soft and the sauce begins to thicken or glaze.
10. Carve the chops by de-boning and slicing the meat, being sure to give everyone a slice of the “tenderloin” portion of the porterhouse or T-bone.
11. Add any meat juices from the cutting board to the sauce. If the sauce has cooled, reheat over low heat. Take off the heat and swirl in the butter. Taste for seasoning. Plate the meat, spoon cherries and sauce over it, and serve with your choice of sides.

This is a robustly flavored sauce and goes well with a hearty side dish: farro or brown rice pilaf, polenta, or roughly mashed potatoes with some skin on them. Roasted sweet potato or butternut squash would also complement the dish.

No-Recipe Recipe Suggestions:

Use any other fruit and combination of wine or liquor to make this recipe with what you have on hand:

Apples and cider and/or calvados brandy makes this a Normandy style dish. Prunes or plums and red wine finished with a splash of good Zinfandel wine vinegar to offset the sweetness. Pineapple and rum—use a jerk style seasoning on the pork. Peaches and white wine and a tiny splash of kirsch or peach schnapps with a squirt of lemon. Blackberries and red wine—try an espresso coffee rub on the meat. Let me know what you discover!