

## Pan-Fried Pork Cutlets

SERVES 3

TIME: 30 MINUTES

Look for panko bread crumbs in the Asian foods section at the supermarket. For an Asian touch, replace the lemon wedges with tonkatsu sauce, a ketchup-based sweet brown sauce that can be prepared in just minutes with pantry items (see the variation below). Serve the cutlets with rice (either the sticky Asian-style rice on page 328 or the fluffy American-style rice on page 113) and a simple green vegetable, such as Steamed Broccoli with Toasted Garlic and Lemon (page 66) or Spicy Green Beans with Sesame Seeds (page 75).

- 1/2 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 cup vegetable oil
- 2 cups panko (Japanese-style bread crumbs)
- 1 pork tenderloin (1 to 1 1/4 pounds), trimmed of silver skin, cut crosswise into 6 pieces, and pounded to a thickness of 1/2 inch (see the illustrations on page 238)
- Salt and ground black pepper
- 1 lemon, cut into wedges

1. Adjust an oven rack to the lower-middle position, set a large heatproof plate on it, and heat the oven to 200 degrees. Spread the flour in a pie plate, beat the eggs with 1 tablespoon oil in a second pie plate, and put the panko in a third pie plate. Position the three pie plates in a row on the work surface.

2. Blot the cutlets dry with paper towels and sprinkle thoroughly with salt and pepper. Working with one at a time, dredge each cutlet thoroughly in the flour, shaking off excess. Using tongs, dip both sides of the cutlet into the egg mixture, allowing the excess to drip back into the pie plate to ensure a thin coating. Dip both sides of the cutlet in the panko

bread crumbs, pressing the crumbs with your fingers to form an even, cohesive coat. Place the breaded cutlets in a single layer on a wire rack set over a baking sheet and allow the coating to dry for 5 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, heat 1/2 cup oil in a heavy-bottomed 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering but not smoking. Lay 3 cutlets in the skillet. Fry until deep golden brown and crisp on the first side, gently pressing down on the cutlets with a wide metal spatula to help ensure even browning; check browning partway through, at about 2 1/2 minutes (smaller cutlets from the tail end of the tenderloin may cook quickly). Using tongs, flip the cutlets; reduce the heat to medium and continue to cook until the meat feels firm when pressed gently and the second side is deep golden brown, again checking browning partway through, about 2 1/2 minutes longer. Line the warmed plate with a double layer of paper towels and set the cutlets on top; return the plate to the oven. Discard the oil in the skillet and wipe it clean using tongs and a large wad of paper towels.

4. Repeat step 3, using the remaining 1/2 cup oil and the now-clean skillet and preheating the oil for just 2 minutes to cook the remaining cutlets. Serve immediately with lemon wedges or use the cutlets in one of the recipes on the following pages.

### ➤ VARIATION

#### Pork Cutlets with Tonkatsu Sauce

While the breaded cutlets are resting, mix 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard powder with 1 teaspoon water in a small bowl until smooth. Stir in 1/2 cup ketchup, 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce, and 2 teaspoons soy sauce. Cut the fried cutlets into 3/4-inch-wide strips and drizzle with the sauce.



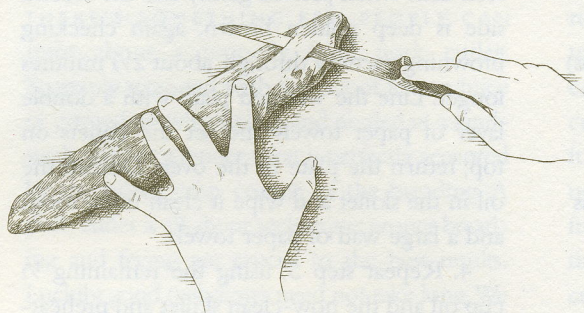
## PAN-FRIED PORK CUTLETS WITH PEPPER AND ONION SAUTÉ

WE KNEW IT WOULD BE EASY TO MAKE a quick sauce in the skillet when it was still hot from frying the cutlets. The trick was to develop a sauce that could be cooked in a short enough time that the cutlets could rest in a warm oven but retain their crisp crust. The sauce had to meet certain criteria, however. It needed to be fairly dry so as to not compromise the crust (the whole point of

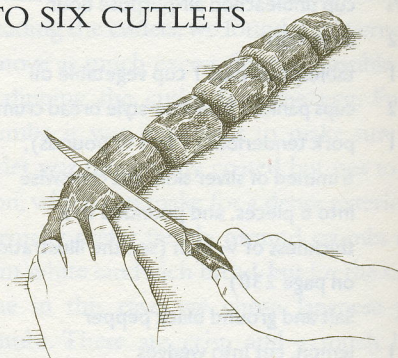
pan-frying the cutlets). Our thoughts gravitated toward a mixture of peppers and onions—something like Spain's *piperade*. The peppers and onions were easy to prepare, and their sweetness would complement the pork. Most important, the mixture was dry enough to not make the cutlets soggy.

In essence, the sauce was nothing but a quick vegetable sauté. For a cooking medium, we turned to flavorful extra-virgin olive oil. We started the garlic first so it would lightly brown and develop a mild nuttiness, ideally suited to the pork's sweet flavor. In next went the onion and peppers to soften and brown. Red bell peppers were the tasters' favorite,

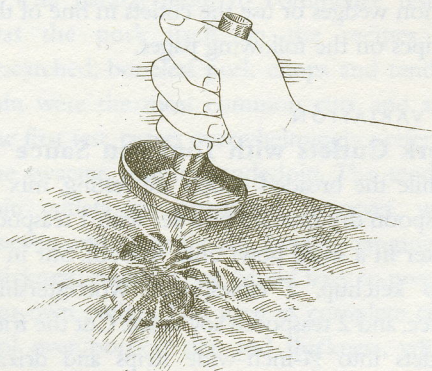
### CUTTING A PORK TENDERLOIN INTO SIX CUTLETS



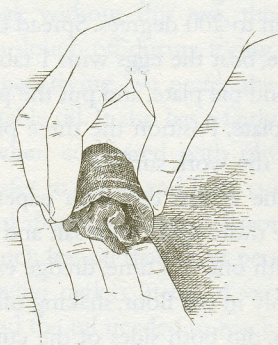
1. Slip a knife under the silver skin, angle it slightly upward, and use a gentle back-and-forth motion to remove it.



2. Cut the tenderloin crosswise into six equal pieces, including the tapered tail end.



3. Standing it on its cut side, sandwich one piece of tenderloin between two sheets of plastic wrap or parchment. Pound gently with a mallet or meat pounder to an even thickness of 1/2 inch.



4. The thin tail piece of the tenderloin requires extra care to produce a cutlet. Fold the tip of the tail under the cut side before pounding between the sheets of parchment or plastic wrap.



though yellow or a combination of the two worked fine as well.

For flavoring the vegetables, tasters were divided between the piney flavor and aroma of rosemary and the simple freshness of parsley. Both had their own charms, so we left the choice to the cook. The rosemary was left whole on the sprig so it could be removed when the flavor was potent enough. From experience, we knew that rosemary could overpower a dish all too quickly.

*We wanted the sauce to remain on the dry side, but liquid was needed to release the flavorful bits that adhered to the skillet as the vegetables browned. Stock accomplished little and water even less, but white wine added a pleasant acidity that sharpened the flavors. A scant ½ cup quickly reduced in the hot skillet, leaving just enough liquid to moisten the vegetables.*

## Pan-Fried Pork Cutlets with Pepper and Onion Sauté

SERVES 3

TIME: 45 MINUTES

*If you would like to add some heat, add a pinch of hot red pepper flakes with the garlic; the chile flavor will be intensified by the toasting. A sprig of marjoram or oregano would be a suitable replacement for the rosemary.*

- 1 recipe Pan-Fried Pork Cutlets (page 237)
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 medium cloves garlic, slivered
- 2 small red bell peppers, stemmed, seeded, and sliced thin
- 1 small onion, halved and sliced thin
- 1 small sprig fresh rosemary or 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves
- Salt
- ½ cup dry white wine
- Ground black pepper

Prepare the cutlets as directed. Thoroughly wipe the skillet clean using tongs and a wad of paper towels. Add the olive oil and garlic to the skillet and heat over medium-high heat, sliding the pan back and forth over the burner to cook the garlic evenly. Cook until the garlic just begins to turn golden brown, 1 to 1½ minutes. Add the peppers, onion, rosemary sprig (if using), and ¼ teaspoon salt. Cook, stirring frequently, until the onion and peppers soften and begin to brown, about 7 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat and add the white wine, scraping the pan with a wooden spoon to release any browned bits. (If using parsley, stir it in now. Discard the rosemary sprig.) Adjust the seasonings with salt and pepper and serve alongside (or on top of) the pork cutlets.

## PAN-FRIED PORK CUTLETS, PO' BOY-STYLE

CAJUN AND CREOLE COOKING REPRESENT some of this country's finest indigenous cooking, from humble street snacks to fine dining feasts. Even the lowly sandwich is given royal treatment. The po' boy, probably the most famous New Orleans sandwich, is simple at heart but worthy of kings, despite its origins as a humble, filling snack. Po' boys (a contraction of "poor boys") come in all stripes, from grilled steak and fried oysters to a seemingly oddball combination of french fries and roasted pork.

A pork cutlet sandwich takes little work beyond frying the cutlets. Essentially, the po' boy is little more than what in other regions is called a hoagie, torpedo, grinder, or submarine; it's a Dagwood sandwich constructed on a long roll or baguette. We favor our po' boys "dressed," which, in New Orleans patois,



means the sandwich is laden with lettuce, tomato, mayonnaise, and pickles.

As one might expect, little technique is involved with making a po' boy; the sandwich is all about the ingredients. For bread, a fresh, crusty baguette is essential. The crisp exterior holds in the exuded juices and provides textural contrast to the softer filling. The soft, chewy crumb acts as a blotter for the juices. Staying true to tradition, we scooped out a portion of the crumb to make room for the filling—of which there is plenty to pack in.

First things first; a layer of mayonnaise is thickly slathered on the bread. Next comes the pickle so its juices can mingle with the mayonnaise and lubricate the otherwise dry sandwich. With the pork cutlet, tasters preferred

the sweet-and-sour bite of bread-and butter pickles; dill was a close second. Pickle chips work fine, but the planks make assembly even easier. The lettuce goes on top of the pickle. Sweet, hearty romaine worked well; green leaf lettuce was a close second. We preferred the lettuce sliced into ribbons.

The cutlet itself and thin slices of tomato complete the po' boy. To fit a whole cutlet into the sandwich, we found it best to cut it into three pieces and squeeze them into place by laying them diagonally across the width of the baguette. The tomato, wedged into place, added a mild sweetness and a bit more juice to lubricate the roll. With a stack of napkins and a bottle of cold beer, dinner (or lunch) was served.

#### BUILDING BLOCK RECIPE

### Pan-Roasted Pork Tenderloins

SERVES 4 TO 6

TIME: 35 MINUTES

*While the tenderloins rest, build a quick sauce in the empty pan. Start by sautéing aromatics (garlic, shallots, or onions) until softened and then deglaze the pan with a liquid (stock, wine, or juice) and simmer until the sauce thickens. Finish with herbs and seasonings (anything from capers or olives to mustard, honey, or maple syrup). Serve sliced pork tenderloin with noodles, rice, or potatoes and add a salad or vegetable to round out the meal.*

- 2 pork tenderloins (about 1 pound each), trimmed of silver skin (see illustration I on page 238) and patted dry with paper towels
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil

1. Adjust an oven rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 425 degrees. Thoroughly rub the tenderloins with the salt and pepper. Heat the oil in a large ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat until smoking. Add the tenderloins to the skillet and cook until browned on the bottom, 1 to 1½ minutes. Using tongs, rotate the tenderloin a quarter-turn; cook until well browned, 1 to 1½ minutes. Repeat two more times until the roast is well browned on all sides.

2. Transfer the skillet to the oven and cook until an instant-read thermometer registers 135 to 140 degrees, 15 to 18 minutes. Remove the skillet from the oven, transfer the meat to a cutting board, tent the tenderloins with aluminum foil, and let rest until the internal temperature registers 145 to 150 degrees, about 10 minutes. Cut the tenderloins crosswise into thin slices and serve immediately.



## Pan-Fried Pork Cutlet Po' Boys

SERVES 6

TIME: 35 MINUTES

*Pickled red onions (page 48) are another good addition to this sandwich.*

- 2 baguettes, cut into 3 equal pieces each (crusty end pieces removed), each piece split open
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup mayonnaise
- 12 bread-and-butter pickle planks or 20 to 25 pickle slices
- 4 cups lightly packed thinly sliced romaine or green leaf lettuce leaves
- 1 recipe Pan-Fried Pork Cutlets (page 237), each cutlet sliced lengthwise into 3 pieces
- 2 medium tomatoes, cored and sliced thin
- Salt and hot pepper sauce, such as Tabasco

Using your fingers, evenly pull out a 1-inch-wide channel of interior crumb from the top and bottom of each piece of baguette. Spread 1 tablespoon mayonnaise over the insides of each piece of baguette. Into each bottom half layer the pickles, lettuce, pork, and tomatoes. Adjust the seasonings with salt and hot pepper sauce to taste. Add the baguette tops and serve immediately.

## ROAST PORK TENDERLOINS, CHINESE-STYLE

QUICK-COOKING, LEAN, AND MODERATELY priced, pork tenderloin is among our favorite cuts of pork. It is easily turned into a variety of dishes, from roasts to cutlets, all simple to prepare and ready in minutes. One of our

favorite pork preparations is a Chinese dish called *char siu*, or roasted pork marinated in a variety of seasonings. While we accepted that traditional *char siu* was out of our league for both time and ingredient considerations, we thought we could make a version with similar flavors that was accessible to the home cook, calling for few exotic ingredients and prepared within a tight time budget.

Most Americans have had *char siu* at one point or another, whether they've recognized it or not. This roasted pork is used in many Chinese restaurant dishes, such as fried rice, pork stir-fries, and dim sum variations. The meat's exterior is characteristically a vibrant red or pinkish hue from a combination of caramelized sugar and red food color. The flavor is both sweet and salty, with a deep hoisin flavor and backnotes of five-spice power, ginger, and garlic. Generally, it is purchased from Asian specialty markets, where it is roasted in large cuts in intensely hot ovens designed for the purpose. *Char siu* is typically incorporated into dishes, not used on its own, and is therefore potently flavored. Our goal, then, was to tone down the seasoning and make the dish into a main-course dish, suitable on its own but good in other dishes too, if there happened to be leftovers.

From the start, we had a game plan for our ersatz *char siu*. In hopes of keeping preparation easy, we wanted to sear the tenderloins on the stovetop for flavor and color and then finish them in a very hot oven. Then, once the meat was cooked through, we would coat it with a thick sauce featuring all the flavors normally present in the marinade. We borrowed the technique from our Beef Teriyaki (page 228). Tenderloins couldn't be easier to prepare, as they require minimal trimming. For this dish, we found it important to remove the silver skin (the tough connective tissue striating the tenderloin's exterior) so it didn't roll up