

The Art of Cuisine



Quick and Crunchy Pork Chops

Breadcrumb-coated pork chops, aka "Shake 'n Bake" pork chops, are a weeknight staple in many households. They may be quick and easy to prepare, but they rarely turn out as pretty as the picture on the box. The crumb coating is typically gummy and bland as can be, seasoned with little but salt and dusty dried herbs. We wanted to make our own rendition that turned out with a crisp coating and rich flavor. Here's what we discovered:

Test Kitchen Discoveries

- Melba toast, crushed into small pieces, makes the crunchiest coating. Break the pieces into rough bits with your fingers, then place them in a zipper-lock bag and smash into small crumbs with a rolling pin.
- Season the crumbs liberally with onion and garlic powders, paprika, salt, dried thyme, and a little bit of sugar. The sugar also helps improve browning.
- Use mayonnaise to "glue" the breadcrumb mixture to the pork. The "Shake 'n Bake" method--using water to stick the crumbs to the meat--inevitably delivered soggy crumbs.
- A hot oven (425 degrees) crisps the crumbs and cooks the meat quickly enough to keep it moist and juicy.

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For a substantial crust, don't break up the Melba toasts too much, and coat the chops well with mayonnaise. Although an instant-read thermometer takes the guesswork out of determining when the meat is done, you can use the "nick-and-peek" method: Use a paring knife to make a slit in the top of the pork chop and take a look at the meat's interior. The Melba crumbs can be made weeks in advance and stored in the freezer. Applesauce is a natural with these chops.

Serves 4

- (5-ounce) box Melba toast , *broken into rough pieces*
- **1/2** teaspoon table salt
- **1/2** teaspoon garlic powder
- **1/2** teaspoon onion powder
- **1/2** teaspoon paprika
- **1/2** teaspoon dried thyme
- **1/8** teaspoon sugar
- **6** tablespoons mayonnaise
- **4** center-cut boneless pork chops , *3/4 inch to 1 inch thick (each 6 to 7 ounces), patted dry with paper towels*

www.TheArtofCuisine.com

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1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 425 degrees. Place Melba toast pieces, salt, garlic powder, onion powder, paprika, thyme, and sugar in heavy-duty zipper-lock freezer bag. Seal bag and pound with heavy blunt object (such as a rolling pin) until Melba toasts are crushed but still have some crumbs the size of small pebbles. Add 2 tablespoons mayonnaise to bag and work mayonnaise evenly into crumb mixture by gently squeezing outside of bag. Transfer Melba crumb mixture to large plate.
2. Using your fingers, coat 1 chop with 1 tablespoon mayonnaise. Transfer to plate with Melba crumbs, sprinkle top of pork chop with some Melba mixture, and press down firmly on chop to adhere crumbs. Flip chop and repeat, making sure that thick layer of crumbs coats both sides and edges. Transfer breaded pork chop to baking rack set over rimmed baking sheet. Repeat with remaining chops.
3. Bake pork chops until juices run clear and instant-read thermometer inserted into center of chop registers 145 to 150 degrees, 16 to 22 minutes. Remove chops from oven and let rest on rack for 5 to 10 minutes. Serve immediately.

Cookscountry.com

Step-by-Step: 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.



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

Step-by-Step: 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.

Shopping List For:
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Chef Linda

Pantry/Dry Goods

- mayonnaise, 6 tablespoons
- 5-ounce box Melba toast, 1
- paprika, 1/2 teaspoon
- onion powder, 1/2 teaspoon
- garlic powder, 1/2 teaspoon
- table salt, 1/2 teaspoon
- sugar, 1/8 teaspoon
- dried thyme, 1/2 teaspoon

Meat

- center-cut boneless pork chops, 4

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