

Success is practically guaranteed when you serve smoked pork chops

One of the fun things about cookouts is that you can go as casual or as sophisticated as you like. Your grill-top offering can be simply hot dogs for the kids or something as enticing as Apricot-Stuffed Smoked Chops for special friends.

As outdoor (or indoor) chef, you're sure to be greeted with raves as you proudly present these delicately flavored chops filled with a unique walnut 'n' spice apricot stuffing. It's another delicious example of why pork and fruit are such a perfect pairing.

For guaranteed success, be sure to select thick chops and cut the pocket

from the rib side so that the stuffing will be sealed during cooking. This makes it unnecessary to close the pocket by skewering or sewing before cooking.

You'll easily spot smoked chops in the meat case for they look like fresh pork chops but are pink in color similar to ham. Smoked chops also resemble ham in flavor and texture, but are not considered ham since ham comes only from the hind leg of the pork carcass. The chops are cut from the prestigious pork loin that has been cured and smoked.

An important member of the meat group, smoked pork chops can play a valuable role in a well-balanced diet. Like fresh pork, the smoked chops are an outstanding source of high-quality (complete) protein, the B-vitamins riboflavin, niacin, thiamin, B-6 and B-12 and the minerals iron and zinc. Thiamin deserves special mention for pork is the leading source of thiamin, containing three times as much as any other food.

Place apricots and water in small saucepan and cook slowly 8 to 10 minutes; drain. Cool. Meanwhile, make a pocket in each chop by cutting into the chop with a small, sharp knife on the rib side parallel to the surface of the chop. Be careful not to cut through the opposite side. Combine apricots, butter, walnuts, sugar, ginger and cinnamon. Fill pocket in each chop with approximately 1/4 cup stuffing, distributing evenly. Place on grill over ash-covered coals so pork chops are 6 to 7 inches from heat. Broil at moderate temperature, turning occasionally, 24 to 26 minutes. Brush chops with corn syrup several times during cooking. 4 servings.

Rice, colorfully accented with tomato, green pepper and ripe olives, goes well with the smoked pork and stuffing as do garden-fresh green beans with sliced mushrooms. Take advantage of the fresh berries in season and end the meal with blue berries topped with a dollop of yogurt.

APRICOT-STUFFED SMOKED CHOPS

4 smoked pork rib chops, cut 1 1/4 inches thick
1 pkg. (6 oz.) dried apricots, coarsely chopped
1 cup water
2 tbsp. butter or margarine, melted
1/4 cup chopped walnuts
2 tsp. sugar
1/4 tsp. ground ginger
1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
3 tbsp. light corn syrup

Even in the winter it's time to picnic

An entertaining idea to try any time of the year might be a country picnic. This picnic is a new and different way of entertaining because it isn't the typical picnic with chicken and potato salad. Instead it's a picnic containing an arrangement of varieties of cheese along with unusual breads, fresh fruits and berries. These foods make up the visual dynamics for the picnic and provide fresh, natural goodness.

The country picnic can be served for breakfast, light lunch or a snack. It's fun because the picnic can take place outside in the prairie grass or in your home next to the fire, just set the mood by spreading out a blanket and serve fresh, natural goodness.

SIMPLY SELECT a variety of cheeses, choosing one to three kinds to complement their distinct flavors with beautiful whole grain breads. Good choices for cheese include a wedge out

of a wheel of Cheddar cheese, a bunk of baby Swiss and one variety of a process cheese. Provide a knife or cheese cutter for each variety. Freshly baked whole grain breads, or French, Italian and sourdough breads add shape and texture to the cheese assortment. Preslice the bread or serve whole loaves with knives nearby for guest to serve themselves.

Fresh fruits and berries add even more shapes, textures and flavors to the picnic. Cheese brings out the sweet bite of grapes, pears or figs and the fruit reciprocates by emphasizing the savory flavor of the cheese. Apples are a natural choice, being both crisp and juicy. Select other fruits that have interesting taste and an unusual design. Fresh figs have an unusual texture because they are soft with the crunch of seeds. Kiwi contains an artistry with the black seeds against its brilliant green surface.

Whether it's a family or a company cookout, the occasion will be special when you serve grilled smoked pork chops filled with a spicy apricot stuffing.

Don't overlook lamb

Looking for something special to satisfy hearty outdoor appetites? Don't overlook lamb.

Lamb loin and rib chops are great on the grill as are sirloin chops. Or stretch the budget with thrifty arm and blade lamb chops. Delicious and economical, too, are lamb riblets and patties made with ground lamb. Kabobs, made with chunks of lamb, are also sure to appeal. If you have a rotisserie unit, treat the outdoor crowd to a boneless shoulder

roast or boneless leg roast cooked to a turn over the coals.

With all lamb cuts on the grill, be sure to keep the fire low to moderate and avoid overcooking. Lamb is delicious cooked to rare and medium as well as to the traditional well-done stage. You may choose to simply cook lamb on the grill and season, or brush it with a spicy barbecue sauce or a glistening fruit glaze.

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