

Porkers cook up well with microwave

Microwave preparation is especially successful for some foods — processed... — among them. If you own a microwave oven, you're familiar with the magic of microwaves for bacon, ham and many sausages, including the popular hot dog. But how about smoked pork chops? Have you sampled this less familiar meat cut? If not, put smoked pork chops on the market list the next time you want to serve something special.

Both rib and loin smoked pork chops, cut from the pork loin section, are available. You'll note that especially choice, lean loins are selected for smoking. Although possessing a distinctive deliciousness of their own, smoked chops are somewhat similar in flavor to both ham and Canadian bacon, a boneless smoked cut from the loin.

Smoked chops take well to microwave preparation. The chops require minimal cooking time, the exact time depending upon the thickness of the chops, the number cooked, the amount of other food cooked with the chops and the wattage of the microwave oven used.

Because of the differences in microwave ovens and in the size of chops, exact cooking times cannot be given. However, consider the following times as a guide.

Two rib or loin smoked pork chops: cut 1 inch thick, 7 to 8 minutes; cut ¾ inch thick, 5½ to 6½ minutes; cut ½ inch thick, 3 to 3½ minutes; four rib or loin smoked pork chops: cut 1 inch thick, 12 to 13 minutes; cut ¾ inch thick, 8½ to 10 minutes; cut ½ inch thick, 5 to 5½ minutes.

Although the appearance of the chops after microwaving was good, they were even more attractive when glazed during cooking, as in the following recipe for Plum-Glazed Smoked Pork Chops. The chops also can be cooked in combination with a variety of foods to provide a number of appetizing entrees. For starters, try Aloha Smoked Pork Chops and Smoked Pork Chops with Hot Cabbage Slaw.

PLUM-GLAZED SMOKED PORK CHOPS
4 smoked pork chops, cut 1 inch thick
¼ cup plum preserves
½ tsp. prepared mustard
¼ tsp. ground ginger

Combine preserves, mustard and ginger in 1-cup glass measure. Microwave at high 1 minute. Place chops in 11½ x 7½-inch microwave-safe dish; brush with half of glaze. Microwave at high 6 minutes. Turn chops over and brush with remaining glaze. Rotate dish ¼ turn. Microwave at high 6 minutes. 4 servings.

ALOHA SMOKED PORK CHOPS
4 smoked pork chops, cut ¾ to 1 inch thick
¼ cup raisins
1 can (8½ oz.) pineapple chunks in syrup
2 tsp. cornstarch
¼ tsp. crushed red pepper
¼ tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. white vinegar
1 medium green pepper, cut into thin strips

Plump raisins in water. Place chops in 11½ x 7½-inch microwave-safe dish. Cover with waxed paper; microwave at high 9 minutes. Turn chops over and rotate dish ¼ turn. Meanwhile, drain pineapple syrup, adding water to make ¼ cup. Mix cornstarch, red pepper and garlic powder; stir in vinegar and combine with pineapple liquid. Drain raisins. Place pineapple chunks, green pepper and raisins around chops; pour pineapple liquid over all. Cover dish with waxed paper and microwave at high 7 minutes or until heated through, 4 servings.

SMOKED PORK CHOPS WITH HOT CABBAGE SLAW
4 smoked pork chops, cut ¾ inch thick
3 cups shredded cabbage
1½ cup coarsely grated carrots
½ cup finely chopped green or red pepper
½ cup chopped onion
2 tsp. mayonnaise
2 tsp. prepared mustard
1½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce
¾ tsp. sugar
¼ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. celery seed

Combine cabbage, carrots, green pepper, onion, mayonnaise, mustard, Worcestershire sauce, sugar, salt and celery seed. Place in layer in 11½ x 7½-inch microwave-safe dish. Place pork chops on top of slaw. Cover with waxed paper and microwave at high 7 minutes. Remove chops and stir slaw. Re-place chops, inverting from original side. Rotate dish ¼ turn. Cover and continue cooking 7 minutes or until done. Serves 4.

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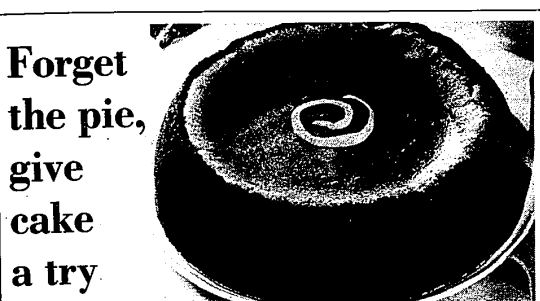
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Ginger Snap Crust (recipe follows)
3 pkgs. (8 oz. each) cream cheese, softened
¼ cup granulated sugar
¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar
2 tsp. pumpkin pie spice
2 tsp. vanilla
6 eggs
1 can (16 oz.) pumpkin or 2 cups mashed cooked fresh pumpkin
Orange peel spiral, optional

Prepare Ginger Snap Crust. Chill. In large mixing bowl, beat together cream cheese, sugars, spice and vanilla at high speed until fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in pumpkin until blended. Pour into chilled crust. Bake in preheated 350-degree oven until knife inserted near center comes out clean, about 1 hour, 15 minutes. Turn off oven. Allow cheesecake to cool in oven with door ajar 30 minutes. Continue to cool on wire rack. Refrigerate until firm, at least 8 hours or overnight. To serve, remove rim of pan and cut into wedges. Garnish with orange peel spiral, if desired. Serves 10 to 12.

GINGER SNAP CRUST
1 egg
1 tsp. butter, melted
2 cups crushed ginger snaps (about 30 to 35 2-inch cookies)
1 tsp. grated orange peel

Beat together egg and butter until well blended. Stir in crushed ginger snaps and orange peel until thoroughly combined. Press firmly onto bottom and up sides of lightly greased 9-inch springform pan.

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