

# Fixing Glazed Pork Chops

The best way to produce tender, juicy chops with a stay-put glaze is to take it slow. Bonus: You'll have built-in time for making a side dish.

≧ BY LAN LAM ≦

**O**n busy weeknights, I often build meals around boneless pork chops. Their mild taste makes them easy to pair with sides, they're ready to cook straight from the package, and they don't require hours of cooking to turn tender.

But plain chops can be boring, so I like to gussy them up a bit. This time, I had my sights set on a sweet, tangy glaze. I could picture juicy chops with a rich, glossy coating clinging tenaciously to the tops and sides. And yet, as soon as I started experimenting with recipes, I realized this was fantasy: By the time a glazed chop reaches your plate, its coating ends up everywhere but on the meat.

Many glazes are made with jams, jellies, or preserves, which is a big part of the problem. They are sugary and offer sheen, but they liquefy when heated. I needed a sweet option that would stay put. Enter apple butter: It's still sweet, but it's also packed with apple solids. That means it won't budge when heated.

I spiked some apple butter with maple syrup, Dijon mustard, soy sauce, and cider vinegar and painted the mixture onto a batch of pan-seared chops. The deeply browned, glistening chops looked terrific, so I called my colleagues to taste. But by the time they arrived, my pride had faded to embarrassment: The chops had become surrounded by a watery pool of glaze.

I realized that although pan searing is great for producing a substantial crust on meat, the intense heat causes the proteins on the meat's surface to contract and squeeze out liquid as it rests. And that liquid diluted my glaze. I had a hunch that slow roasting would be better: The low, ambient heat would cook the pork gently, so it would exude less liquid during the resting period.

I brushed a teaspoon of glaze onto each chop before popping the baking sheet into a 275-degree oven. After 40 minutes, the chops were nearly cooked through and the thin glaze had dried to a tacky film that was primed for a more substantial application—great news since I like a generous amount of glaze. I layered on a



We pair up apple butter and Dijon mustard for a sweet and tangy no-cook glaze that clings to the boneless chops. For an easy supper, serve the chops with fork-mashed potatoes.

second coat and slid the sheet under the broiler. This brought the chops to 140 degrees (the ideal serving temperature) and fused the sweet, tangy lacquer to the meat. It also added a hint of char—a good stand-in for the intense brooding produced via pan searing. Just as I'd hoped, the meat exuded very little liquid, so the glaze wasn't diluted and clung nicely.

The final benefit of slow roasting was the time I had to prep a simple side. I whipped up one of my go-tos: fork-mashed potatoes. All I needed to do was boil baby potatoes, drain and mash them, and then gloss them with extra-virgin olive oil and butter. I also used a trick from the test kitchen to ensure well-seasoned potatoes: I boiled them in heavily salted water with a garlic clove and a few sprigs of thyme.

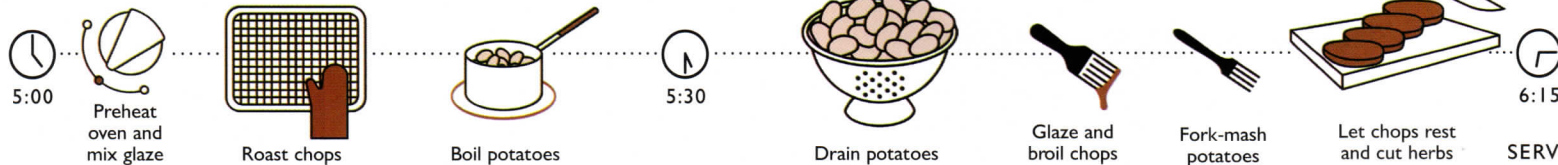
Since I had time to spare, I chopped some parsley to add color, freshness, and vibrancy to both dishes.

With my technique established, it was easy to swap out ingredients and change the personality of the menu. A spicy glaze made with gochujang (Korean chile-soybean paste) gave the chops an intense savory flavor. (Like apple butter, gochujang doesn't thin out when heated.) I used the roasting time to clean and pan-roast some sugar snap peas, which I seasoned with minced garlic and a dash of soy sauce.

I think you'll love these tender, juicy chops—especially their picture-perfect glaze—as well as the sides that go with them. You'll even have time to spare to tidy up the kitchen and set the table. Or, better yet, pour a glass of wine and put someone else in charge.

## Game Plan: Pork Chops and Potatoes

Follow this order of operations and you'll have dinner on the table in about an hour.





## Slow Roasting Makes the Glaze Stick

A comparison of pan-seared and slow-roasted chops shows that slow roasting is the better choice for glazed chops.



### PAN-SEARED: GLAZE RUNS OFF

Intense heat causes the proteins at the surface of the meat to contract and squeeze out about 1 tablespoon of glaze-diluting liquid during resting.



### SLOW-ROASTED: GLAZE STAYS PUT

Cooked via low, gentle heat, the chop sheds only ½ teaspoon of liquid while it rests, so the glaze doesn't budge.

## MUSTARDY APPLE BUTTER-GLAZED PORK CHOPS

SERVES 4 TOTAL TIME: 1 ¼ HOURS

If your broiler has multiple temperature settings, use the highest. We like the consistency that Musselman's Apple Butter gives the glaze; if you're using another brand, you may need to thin the glaze with up to 1 tablespoon of water. Our recipe for Mustardy Apple Butter-Glazed Pork Chops for Two is available for free for four months at [CooksIllustrated.com/feb20](http://CooksIllustrated.com/feb20).

- 3 tablespoons apple butter
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 4 (6- to 8-ounce) boneless pork chops, ¾ to 1 inch thick, trimmed
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh parsley

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 275 degrees. Line rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil and set wire rack in sheet. Spray rack with vegetable oil spray. Stir apple butter, maple syrup, mustard, soy sauce, and vinegar together in small bowl.



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2. Sprinkle salt evenly over both sides of chops. Place chops on prepared wire rack and brush 1 teaspoon glaze on top and sides of each chop. Roast until meat registers 135 to 137 degrees, 40 to 45 minutes.

3. Remove sheet from oven and heat broiler. Brush 1 tablespoon glaze on top and sides of each chop. Return sheet to oven and broil until glaze is bubbly and slightly charred in spots, 3 to 6 minutes. Let rest for 5 minutes. Sprinkle with parsley and serve.

## FORK-MASHED POTATOES WITH HERBS

SERVES 4 TOTAL TIME: 45 MINUTES

Chives, tarragon, chervil, or a combination can be substituted for the parsley. Use baby potatoes measuring 1 to 2 inches in diameter.

- 1½ pounds baby potatoes, unpeeled
- Table salt for cooking potatoes
- 1 garlic clove, peeled
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 4 pieces
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley

1. Place potatoes, 1 teaspoon salt, garlic, and thyme sprigs in medium saucepan. Add cold water to cover potatoes by 1 inch and bring to boil over high heat. Adjust heat to maintain steady simmer and cook until paring knife meets no resistance when inserted into largest potato, 20 to 25 minutes. Drain potatoes; discard garlic and thyme sprigs. Return potatoes to saucepan.

2. Use large fork or wooden spoon to break potatoes into rough ½-inch chunks. Add butter, oil, and parsley and toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve.

## SPICY GOCHUJANG-GLAZED PORK CHOPS

SERVES 4 TOTAL TIME: 1 ¼ HOURS

Red miso can be substituted for the white miso. If your broiler has multiple temperature settings, use the highest. Make sure to use gochujang paste, which comes in a tub, instead of the sauce, which comes in a bottle. Our recipe for Spicy Gochujang-Glazed Pork Chops for Two is available for free for four months at [CooksIllustrated.com/feb20](http://CooksIllustrated.com/feb20).

- 4 teaspoons gochujang paste
- 4 teaspoons white miso
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon orange juice
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 4 (6- to 8-ounce) boneless pork chops, ¾ to 1 inch thick, trimmed
- 1 scallion, sliced thin

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 275 degrees. Line rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil and set wire rack in sheet. Spray rack

with vegetable oil spray. Stir gochujang, miso, soy sauce, maple syrup, orange juice, and garlic together in small bowl.

2. Sprinkle salt evenly over both sides of chops. Place chops on prepared wire rack and brush 1 teaspoon glaze on top and sides of each chop. Roast until meat registers 135 to 137 degrees, 40 to 45 minutes.

3. Remove sheet from oven and heat broiler. Brush 1 tablespoon glaze on top and sides of each chop. Return sheet to oven and broil until glaze is bubbly and slightly charred in spots, 3 to 6 minutes. Let rest for 5 minutes. Sprinkle with scallion and serve.

## SKILLET-ROASTED SUGAR SNAP PEAS

SERVES 4 TOTAL TIME: 15 MINUTES

Black or white sesame seeds (or a combination) can be used in this recipe. For a tip on toasting black sesame seeds, see page 2.

- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 pound sugar snap peas, strings removed
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce

1. Toast sesame seeds in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat, stirring frequently, until lightly browned, about 2 minutes. Transfer to bowl. Heat oil in now-empty skillet over high heat until shimmering. Add snap peas in single layer and cook, without stirring, for 30 seconds. Toss snap peas and spread into single layer. Continue to cook, tossing every 30 seconds, until snap peas are spotty brown and crisp-tender, 2 to 3 minutes longer.

2. Add garlic and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add soy sauce and cook until all liquid has evaporated, about 30 seconds. Off heat, add sesame seeds and toss to combine. Serve.



Boldly flavored miso-and-gochujang-glazed chops are complemented by a simple side of sugar snap peas.