

Lean Pork!

David Newman, Ph.D., Former Swine/Meat Science Specialist
Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D., Food and Nutrition Specialist

Pork can serve as the basis of a wide variety of tasty meals for you and your family. Today's pork is very lean and healthful to eat. Pork provides a host of vitamins and minerals.

Did you know?

Today's pork has 16% less fat and 27% less saturated fat compared with pork in 1991. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has analyzed pork for trans-fatty acids (bad fats), and the results confirm that pork contains no artery-clogging trans fat, either.

On a 2,000-calorie diet, health experts recommend that total fat in the diet be less than 65 grams, with no more than 20 grams of saturated fat. Figure 1 shows the comparison of the fat content of different cuts of pork compared with chicken. Pork tenderloin, for example, has about the same amount of fat and saturated fat as skinless chicken breast. Pork chops have less total fat than skinless chicken thighs.

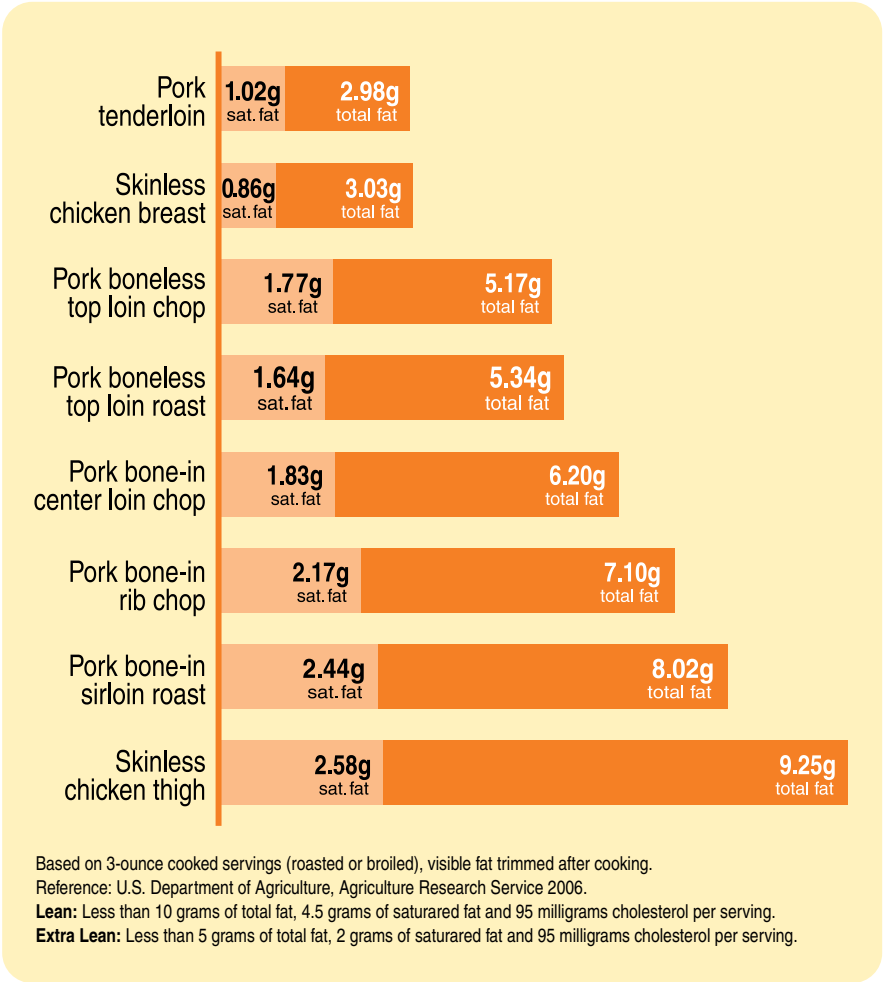


Figure 1. Fat and saturated fat comparison between pork and chicken.

Preparing healthful meals that feature pork starts at the supermarket and ends at the table. When choosing and preparing pork, keep the following tips in mind:

Get a lean start

- Use cuts with the words “loin” in their name, such as pork tenderloin or loin chop, for the leanest meats.
- For the leanest pork, look for cuts with minimal visible fat.

Skim and trim

- To cut total fat content per serving in half, remove excess fat prior to cooking.
- Skim fat from pan juices after pan-broiling.

Cook it light

- Use low-fat cooking methods, such as grilling, broiling, stir-frying and pan-broiling to maximize flavor while keeping added fat to a minimum.
- Broil, grill or roast on a rack so natural fat from meat drips away.
- Cook thin cuts of meat quickly, with little or no fat, by pan-broiling or “dry sautéing” in a nonstick skillet with a little juice or broth.
- Add stock, wine or fruit juice to the skillet after the meat is removed. Heat and stir, then use the stock, wine or juice as a low-fat sauce or glaze.
- Stir-fry with vegetable cooking spray or a small amount of flavored oil.
- Marinate for flavor and juiciness. Try juice, wine-flavored vinegar or fat-free dressing instead of oil-based marinades.



Add some spice

- Season meats with herbs and spices (other than salt) to boost flavor and cut back on fat and salt at the same time. Rub herbs and spices onto the pork before grilling, broiling or roasting.
- Experiment with different seasonings to discover exciting new ways to enjoy healthful eating.

S-T-R-E-T-C-H flavorful, higher-fat ingredients

- Use favorite foods such as sharp cheeses and herb-flavored oils to flavor your dishes, but cut the amount in half.
- Use low-fat cheeses or whipped or reduced-fat butter.

Lighten up on the ladle

- To get the most benefit from the vegetables you're eating, use less of a regular salad dressing, or use a fat-free variety or herb-flavored vinegar instead.
- Choose cream-based sauces and gravies less often than sauces made with skim milk or fat-free broth.

Keep Meat Safe at Home

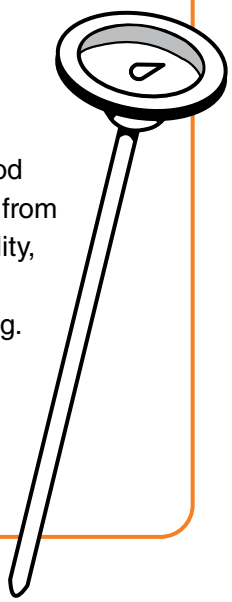
- Thaw meat in the microwave or refrigerator, not in the sink or on the counter. Microwave-thawed meat should be cooked immediately.
- Store raw meat in the coldest part of the refrigerator or meat drawer. Keep it below ready-to-eat foods to avoid cross-contamination.
- Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm running water before and after handling food.
- Keep cutting boards used for cutting raw meat separate from ready-to-eat foods.

* * *

Meat Thermometer How-to:

Pork often can be overcooked, so checking the internal temperature often will help prevent dry pork. Pork is safe to eat slightly pink, just like roast beef.

For safety, the USDA recommends cooking ground pork patties and ground pork mixtures such as meat loaf to 160 degrees Fahrenheit. Cook all raw pork steaks, chops, and roasts to a minimum internal temperature of 145 degrees as measured with a food thermometer before removing meat from the heat source. For safety and quality, allow meat to rest for at least three minutes before carving or consuming. For reasons of personal preference, consumers may choose to cook meat to higher temperatures.



Recipes

courtesy of the National Pork Board

Key to abbreviations:

c. = cup
Tbsp. = tablespoon
tsp. = teaspoon
oz. = ounce
lb. = pound
pkg. = package
g = gram
mg = milligram

Honey Pork Tenderloin Kabobs

Time: 15 minutes prep/15 minutes cook

2 Tbsp. cider vinegar
½ c. honey
½ c. mustard
1 tsp. dried tarragon
3 to 4 sweet potatoes, cut into twenty-four 1-inch cubes
1½ lb. pork tenderloin, cut into twenty-four 1-inch cubes
4 medium ripe peaches, unpeeled, pitted and quartered
4 green peppers, each cut into eight 2-inch pieces
8 yellow onions, each cut into four 2-inch pieces
olive oil, for grilling

Soak wood kabob skewers in water prior to adding meat and veggies to prevent burning the sticks on the grill. In a bowl, mix the first 4 ingredients. Stir well and set glaze aside. Steam or boil sweet potatoes until crisp-tender. Thread 3 sweet potato cubes, 3 pork cubes, 2 peach quarters, 4 green pepper pieces and 4 onion pieces alternately onto each of eight 10-inch skewers. Brush kabobs with honey glaze mixture. Lightly oil grill. Grill over medium-hot coals 5 minutes on each side or until thoroughly heated, basting occasionally with glaze.

Makes eight servings. Each serving has 300 calories, 47 g carbohydrate, 2 g fat, 5 g fiber and 345 mg sodium.

America's Favorite Pork Chops

Time: 20 minutes prep/15 minutes cook

4 pork chops, ¾-inch thick
¾ c. Italian dressing*
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce

Place all ingredients in a self-sealing bag; seal bag and place in refrigerator for at least 20 minutes (or as long as overnight).

Remove chops from bag, discarding marinade, and grill over a medium-hot fire, turning once, until just done, about 8 to 11 minutes total cooking time, until internal temperature on a thermometer reads 145 F.

*Option: To reduce calories and fat, use a reduced-fat Italian dressing.

Makes four servings. Each serving has 210 calories, 5 g carbohydrate, 11 g fat and 910 mg sodium.

For more information, visit:

NDSU Extension Nutrition, Food Safety and Health
www.ag.ndsu.edu/food

NDSU Extension does not endorse commercial products or companies even though reference may be made to tradenames, trademarks or service names.

For more information on this and other topics, see www.ndsu.edu/extension

North Dakota State University is an equal opportunity educator and employer. NDSU Extension and the Agricultural Experiment Station's work is supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. NDSU Extension and the NDAES are committed to providing equal access. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language) or other disability-related accommodations may request them at 701-231-1865. Advanced notice of two weeks is preferred to allow for adequate planning. 2M-4-10, web-8-21, web-11-26