

Pork tenderloin is a long cut of muscle from the loin of the pig, which runs along the upper side between the shoulder and the leg. The tenderloin is unsparing: use meat from a conventionally raised (“Pork—the other white meat”) pig and overcook it, and you’ll be gnawing on something resembling damp cardboard. What’s most important to know about this meat is that it is very tender and lean, so you never want to subject it to moist cooking, and unless it comes from a traditional old breed that was bred to have plenty of fat (a so-called *bacon pig*: for example, a Berkshire), you’ll probably want to brine it before cooking. Most tenderloins are about a pound in weight, and our three recipes this month start with two one-pound tenderloins, grill them, and then present them in three different ways:

**Simple grilled pork tenderloin over spring greens**  
**Mexican salad of pork tenderloin and vegetables**  
**Pork ‘n potato salad**

**Cooking tip:** You may have grown up cooking meat by minutes-per-pound. That’s a highly imperfect method because it does not take into account your cooking vessel/surface. If you cook in cast iron, for example, meat will cook much faster because cast iron *stores* heat, while aluminum does not. Similarly, steel grill bars will not impart as much heat as cast iron ones do. So invest, if you’ve not already done so, in an instant-read thermometer. Make sure it’s one whose sensor is not too high up the shaft—you can identify the location of the sensor by looking for the small indentation—or buy a probe/monitor; the sensor is at the tip in this kind.

You’re not finished with modifying your meat-roasting method yet. Remove the meat from the grill, oven, or stovetop *at least* 8–10° before the meat reaches the strike temperature. Why? Because like every other food, meat continues to cook from the residual heat inside it for 7–10 minutes after you remove it from the heat source. That’s what the mystifying term *rest the meat* refers to. Doing this is particularly important when roasting cuts like pork tenderloin because they have no reserved fat to help them accommodate overcooking; they simply dry out.

The strike temperature for your pork tenderloin is 145°. Remove the meat from the grill (or oven) when it hits about 133°, then watch the monitor or thermometer as it climbs upward to 145°. You’ll be rewarded with a fabulously juicy piece of meat.

**Simple Grilled Pork Tenderloin over Spring Greens**

*Cook both tenderloins, serve part of them over spring greens, and reserve the rest for the other dishes. First you’ll marinate the pork overnight, then grill it. To keep the flavors for the other dishes vivid, you’ll combine cooked meat with fresh ingredients.*

1 tenderloin makes 6 servings.

*Ingredients:*

- 4 limes
- 2 lemons
- 1 orange
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- A few shakes of red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon of kosher salt
- 2 one-pound pork tenderloins
- Several handfuls of tender green leaves (spinach, tat choi, chard, mesclun, mustard, lettuce, etc.)
- A smidge of tasty coarse finishing salt
- 1 teaspoon of Dijon mustard
- Juice from half of a small juicy lemon
- 1 teaspoon of kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1 teaspoon of shallot, finely minced
- 1½ tablespoons of tasty extra-virgin olive oil (Napa Valley Naturals Rich & Robust is great)
- Juices from cooked pork tenderloin
- Handful of flavorful cherry tomatoes
- Small handful of fresh basil leaves, torn into big pieces

1. Zest the limes, lemons, and orange, and put the zest in a one-gallon-sized Ziploc baggie. Squeeze the juice from the fruit and add to bag, along with olive oil, red pepper flakes, and salt. Stir the ingredients inside the bag, then add the two pork tenderloins. Seal bag and refrigerate overnight.
2. When you're ready to grill, light the fire and wait for the coals to turn gray. You'll be grilling over direct heat, so make sure the fire is hot (that is, your hand can only stand about 2 seconds of being held close above the grill).
3. Lightly lubricate the grill bars; pat the tenderloin to remove most of the marinade, and place the meat on the grill. If you're using a probe/monitor, insert it at a 45° angle into the center of the meat. Grill for 1½ minutes to a side. (Tenderloins are almost rectangular, so you can treat them as if they have four sides.) Continue turning the meat until it reaches 133°, then remove it to a clean plate and allow it to continue cooking off the heat.
4. While the meat finishes cooking off the heat, prepare the salad: Place washed and dried green leaves and put them in a large bowl. Salt them *very* lightly with coarse, tasty salt.
5. Make the vinaigrette: In a small bowl, combine mustard, salt, pepper, shallot, and then use a fork to whisk in the olive oil until the mixture becomes thickened. Pour the juices from the meat into the vinaigrette, and once the strike temperature of the meat has been reached (140–145°), pour the vinaigrette over the greens. Use your hands to mix it in, then add torn basil and tomatoes; mix them in tenderly.
6. Pile the greens onto a large plate, cut the meat crosswise into slices about 1–1½ inches thick, and put them atop the salad.

### **Mexican salad of pork tenderloin and vegetables**

*This simple summer salad uses the flavors of Mexico to create a speedy and satisfying dish from the already-cooked meat. Serve it alongside rice flavored and colored with cilantro.*

Makes 4 servings.

#### *Ingredients:*

- ½ pound cooked pork tenderloin, sliced thinly crosswise or cut into dice
- 2 cups of cooked black beans
- 2 or 3 ripe tomatoes, diced
- 3 scallions, white and green parts, cut crosswise into ½ inch slices
- ½ cup white onion, finely chopped
- ½ cup fresh or frozen and cooked corn
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 pickled chipotles, chopped
- 1 fresh jalapeño, finely minced
- Handful of fresh cilantro leaves
- Zest from one lime
- 2 teaspoons of fresh lime juice
- ½ teaspoon of ground cumin seed
- 1/4 teaspoon of ground cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon of ground cloves
- 1 teaspoon of kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons of tasty extra-virgin olive oil (Napa Valley Naturals Rich & Robust is great)

1. Cut the cooked pork into thin slices or cubes and put in a big salad bowl.
2. Add drained, cooked black beans, diced tomatoes, scallions, onions, corn, chipotles, jalapeño, and cilantro leaves. Mix gently with your hands.
3. Make the vinaigrette: First, zest the lime, and add zest to the meat mixture. In a small bowl, combine lime juice, ground cumin, cinnamon, and cloves; add salt, and then whisk in olive oil until mixture becomes thick. Taste, and adjust seasonings if needed. Pour vinaigrette over salad, and again mix gently with your hands. Serve with rice on the side.

### **Pork 'n Potato Salad**

*Now that summer's here, lovely little grade C new potatoes are available at the market again. Incredibly sweet and velvety, they're a perfect complement to the sweetness of grilled pork tenderloin. Serve ripe, sliced peaches and tomatoes alongside—nothing better!*

Makes 4 servings.

#### *Ingredients:*

- 1 pound of fresh grade C potatoes
- 1 teaspoon of coarse finishing salt
- 1 tablespoon of pickled capers, chopped (*optional*)
- ½ pound cooked pork tenderloin, cut into 1-inch dice
- Zest from half of a small lemon

1 teaspoon of Dijon mustard  
2 teaspoons of sherry vinegar  
1 teaspoon of kosher salt  
Freshly ground black pepper to taste  
1½ tablespoons of tasty extra-virgin olive oil  
Small handful of fresh, torn basil leaves

1. Cook the potatoes (5 minutes in a pressure cooker; about 10 minutes on the stovetop in a pot of water). Drain potatoes, allow to cool for about 5 minutes, then cut potatoes in half and toss in a salad bowl with finishing salt. Add capers, if you're using them, the pork, and the lemon zest. Use your hands to gently combine the ingredients well.
2. Make the vinaigrette: In a small bowl, mix mustard, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Whisk in olive oil until the mixture thickens. Pour the vinaigrette over the meat and potatoes, add basil leaves, and mix again gently with your hands. Taste, and adjust seasonings. Allow the salad to sit for at least 30 minutes before eating it.