

Chinese Fried Pork
aka: This little piggy went to market...
by Chef Brian Henry

The domesticated pig is a descendant of a Eurasian species of wild boar. Pigs are known for their seemingly insatiable omnivorous appetite. With their indiscriminate desire for food pigs will literally eat anything. This haphazard approach to eating led to the popularity of pork's demise. In the seventies and early eighties the animals were often being fed restaurant and grocery store scraps. These scraps were stored outdoors for pick up and would sometimes become contaminated with rodents that carried the disease trichinosis and its parasitic worms which in turn would infect the pigs who ate these scraps.

As a result many of us like me were raised on pork that was so over cooked; it was literally cooked to death to kill off all sources of trichinosis. To overcome the dried out, shoe like quality that I associate with my early memories of eating pork, I recall having to consume more apple sauce than pork just to get the pork to go down.

Thirty years later and I'm still surprised to find how many people shy away from pork in their diet. Some think of it as a disease (trichinosis) infested dirty animal. Others think of pork as a coronary inducing fat laden source of protein. New regulations regarding pork feed were introduced in 1980 which were implemented to eliminate the occurrence of the trichinosis pork. Today in North America there are fewer than 15 cases of trichinosis infection reported annually. Most of these infections come from game meats such as bear, wild boar and oddly enough walrus meat. The elimination of trichinosis in pork allows us to cook it to an internal temperature of 140°f or medium doneness and we can pass on the apple sauce.

Pigs are now being raised on controlled feed and are harvested around six months of age. Since 1980 these combined practices have led to the average fat content of pork cuts being reduced by more than one-third.

Pigs use their muscles more sporadically than other animals, which is why pork is know as the "other white meat" as it has a larger portion of white muscle fibers compared to only about 15% red muscle fibers. White muscle fibers are used for exerting rapid amounts of force or movement for short periods of time where red muscles fibers are for prolonged efforts such as walking or flying.

I have chosen pork from Evergreen Farm located in Bailieboro for this recipe. What I like most about their pork is that it is raised naturally on corn and grain feed without hormones or antibiotics. It is available at their farm gate or at the Peterborough Farmers Market.

Chinese Fried Pork

8 oz boneless pork
Vegetable oil for deep-frying
one-quarter cup rice wine
2 tsp soy sauce
3 tbsp cornstarch
3 tbsp water

Cut the pork into rectangular strips that measure 2 inches by 1 inch. Marinate the pork in the rice wine for 2 hours. Remove the pork from the marinade. Using a sieve, drain off the excess wine. Discard the wine, reserving the pork in a medium sized bowl. In a small bowl whisk together the soy sauce and rice wine. Separately whisk together the cornstarch and water. Once the cornstarch is completely dissolved pour the mixture in with the soy sauce. Pre heat a counter top deep fryer to 375°f.

Coat the pork pieces with the soy-cornstarch mixture. Shake off any excess soy.

Deep-fry the pork in small batches until the coating becomes crisp. Remove the pork, drain and let stand for 2 minutes while your oil reheats to 375°f. Continue this process until all of the pork is cooked. Serve immediately with spiced pepper-salt as a dip.



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