

**SKILLET-ROASTED  
BONELESS PORK CHOP**

with pickled cherry peppers,  
rosemary, and garlic  
RECIPE PAGE 154



# HOW TO COOK



A PRACTICAL, HANDS-ON GUIDE TO THE TOOLS  
A MAN NEEDS, THE WAYS THAT FOOD COOKS, AND  
HOW TO DO EVERYTHING A LITTLE BIT BETTER

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**IME WAS, YOU WERE** pretty sure that the best food was the kind that was the easiest to find. Or the kind you consume at a stadium, with a game going on in front of you. This was before everyone watched the Food Network and *Top Chef* and the sadistic reality shows hosted by that angry British chef who screams at his “cheftestants” until the veins in his neck bulge and his shrinking victims either cry or go to the hospital with heart trouble. ¶ Well, my friend, the game has changed.

AN INTRODUCTION  
AND  
RALLYING CRY BY  
**MARIO BATALI**

¶ Cooking at home is now fully documented as cool, exceedingly good for you, fun to do, and, most significantly, an attractor of women. Plus, forces are conspiring to make it increasingly easy to do. When I was getting started, the books were a lot heavier, the guidance was much harder to find, and there wasn’t a kitchen store (or two) in every mall. Like golf-club manufacturers, the kitchen-equipment folks constantly improve the tools of the trade, making nearly fool-proof pots, pans, knives, steamers, pizza ovens, pasta rollers, and blenders, all virtually maintenance free and priced to move. (You don’t need a lot of gadgets, →

ALL RECIPES AS TOLD TO **FRANCINE MAROUKIAN** / ILLUSTRATIONS BY **WESLEY MERRITT**



→ but if you want to indulge the male tendency to overstock the toolbox, you can.) And all the information you could want is constantly streaming at you like a runaway truck—books, newspaper stories, Web sites, apps, how-to videos, this article you're reading, even entire magazines devoted to single subjects like charcuterie or wedding cakes or pickles, all to help you source it, buy it, rub it, season it, roast it, braise it, frost it, sear it, stir-fry it, or, perhaps, *sous vide* it. You have power. I hope you'll use it. Like I said, you don't need much to get started.

Despite what most cookbooks and the Internet suggest, you really need only **THREE KNIVES**. I suggest an eight-inch chef's knife, a four-inch paring knife, and a serrated bread/utility knife. Buy another only when you know exactly why you need it. Opt for a national brand with forged-steel blades and a full tang, which sounds sexy but simply means the forged metal is a single piece running from the tip of the blade all the way through to the base of the handle.

Twelve-piece cookware sets for ninety-nine bucks are routinely hawked on late-night TV—often by friends of mine. But with a mere **FIVE PIECES**, you can do whatever you like—slay the dragon and then cook its tenderloin in the style of the duke of Wellington, if you want to. I like cast iron coated with enamel for longevity and forgiveness if I happen to take my eyes off the prize while pouring Chianti. One twelve-inch sauté/frypan, one eight-inch omelet pan, a seven- or eight-quart spaghetti pot with an insert, a lasagna/roasting pan, and a four-quart saucepan. That's it. When you are ready to tackle Moroccan cooking, I will help you find the *couscoussier*.

Now get a couple of basic **COOKBOOKS** with some nice pictures of things you want to eat. (There's one called *Eat Like a Man*, by Esquire. There are several by me, including a new one, *Molto Batali*. You could start with those.) Read through them, choose a few recipes you think you can handle, and follow the steps all the way to the eating part.

With that you can make virtually anything I can in about the same amount of time. Shop often, shop hard, and spend for the best stuff available—logic dictates that you can make delicious food only with delicious ingredients. There are two activities in life in which we can lovingly and carefully put something inside of someone we love. Cooking is the one we can do three times a day for the rest of our lives, without pills. In both activities, practice makes perfect.

← **SKILL #1: PAN-ROASTING**

# SKILLET-ROASTED BONELESS PORK CHOP

WITH PICKLED CHERRY PEPPERS, ROSEMARY, AND GARLIC

**CHEF: MITCHELL ROSENTHAL,  
TOWN HALL RESTAURANT, SAN FRANCISCO**



**P**an-roasting is a quick two-step technique in which the meat is seared in a minimal amount of fat and finishes cooking on the stove (rather than being transferred to the oven). That's the beauty of pan-roasting: It's in front of you the whole time, so you can see whether the pan is smoking (shouldn't be, so turn the heat down) and feel with your fingers whether the chop is firming up nicely. Because pan-roasting works for leaner, boneless cuts of meat that can dry out, brining is frequently a precursor to cooking. As opposed to seasoning the surface of the meat, brining—immersing the chops in what amounts to a seasoned saltwater bath—not only allows the seasoning to penetrate the whole chop, it aids in retaining moisture. Ideally you want the pork to sit in the brine for at least twenty-four hours, but if you plan on pork chops for dinner and only have time to toss them in the brine before you go to work, they'll still be better off.

#### For the brine:

5 cups water  
1 tbsp fennel seed, crushed  
2 bay leaves, crumbled  
1 tbsp peppercorns  
2 sprigs rosemary  
3 garlic cloves, peeled and roughly chopped  
6 tbsp sugar  
4 tbsp coarse salt

Place 1 cup of water in a small nonreactive pot and add the fennel, bay leaves, peppercorns, rosemary, and garlic. Bring to a simmer, then remove from heat. Cool to room temperature, 10 to 15 minutes. Add remaining 4 cups water, sugar, and salt and stir until dissolved and the mixture is well combined.

Rinse and pat dry the pork chops and place in a clean bowl. Pour the brine over the chops and place a plate on top to keep the chops submerged. Refrigerate for 24 hours.

#### For the chops:

2 10- to 12-oz boneless center-cut pork chops, about 1¼ to 1½ inches thick, brined  
1 tbsp canola oil  
2 tbsp unsalted butter  
1 large garlic clove, peeled and halved  
1 sprig rosemary  
6 pickled cherry peppers

Take pork chops out of brine, rinse thoroughly under cold water, and pat dry with paper towels. Place an 8-inch cast-iron pan over medium-high heat.<sup>1</sup>

Add the oil<sup>2</sup> to the pan, and when it starts to shimmer, add pork chops.<sup>3</sup> Sear the chops until crusty brown, about 6 minutes on each side. Check the pork as it cooks, and be responsive. Due to the sugar content, the brine may begin to burn, so just move the pork around in the pan a bit. And that knob on your stove turns for a reason, so adjust the heat if you need to.

When you get a good sear on both sides, add butter to the pan. When it begins to brown, lower the heat to medium-low and add the garlic, rosemary, and pickled peppers.<sup>4</sup> Tilt the pan and baste the pork chops with the butter for about 1 minute. The chops should be firm to the touch, but still with a bit of give.

Remove pan from heat and transfer chops to a small cooling rack, letting them rest undisturbed for about 5 minutes. This simple step lets the proteins relax and reabsorb moisture, distributing the meat's juices evenly throughout. It might be the best 5 minutes you've ever spent.

Place the chops on a plate and top with the peppers and pan juices.

<sup>1</sup>If your skillet is too small, moisture from the overcrowded meat turns to steam and prevents surface browning, which is the main benefit of pan-roasting. If the pan is too large, the oil will spread out as it heats and burn.

<sup>2</sup>Because you're cooking at a high temperature, you need oil with a high smoking point—the temperature at which it starts to give off smoke. Although it might make you feel fancy, don't use extra-virgin olive oil. It burns too quickly for this kind of cooking.

<sup>3</sup>While I usually prefer a chop on the bone, on a stove, the meat closest to the bone—although it's the sweetest—won't cook to the same temperature. So boneless center-cut chops a little more than an inch thick are ideal.

<sup>4</sup>While you can use jarred cherry peppers (or Peppadew or, if you want extra heat, Calabrian), pickling your own adds a notch to your belt and gives you something to do while the pork is in the brine. See the recipe at [esquire.com/chefrosenthal](http://esquire.com/chefrosenthal).