

Grilled Rosemary Garlic Pork Roast

In theory, rosemary, garlic, and pork make a perfect trio. Turning theory into dinner is another matter. BY ADAM RIED



It takes just a spiral of rosemary and garlic to turn a backyard pork roast into something special.

WHAT MAKES BONELESS pork loin so appealing—its lean nature and lack of sinew or gristle—also makes it a challenge to cook: Little fat translates to little flavor and meat that easily dries out. Rosemary and garlic can team up to address the flavor issue, but neither does anything to solve the basic cooking problem. That requires careful grilling technique.

In the test kitchen, we've found it better to score, rather than trim, the thin layer of fat on the top of a pork loin; scoring encourages the fat to melt and baste the meat during cooking. After scoring, we use kitchen twine to tie the roast into an even, cylindrical shape, brown it directly over high heat, and finish cooking it on a cooler section of the grill until the meat reaches an internal temperature of 140 degrees. Yes, the roast will be a bit pink in the middle, but after a 15-minute rest on a carving board, the temperature will rise to a perfectly safe (and still juicy) 150 degrees. Cooking lean pork any further is a recipe for shoe leather.

Potent garlic and rosemary are a natural pairing with pork, but how you add those flavors matters. Studding the roast

with garlic slivers and rosemary leaves perfumed the air as I cooked, but the meat itself was disappointingly bland. I ran across recipes that recommended using kitchen twine to lash long branches of rosemary to the outside of the roast. The dramatic appearance was a thrill. Unfortunately, the branches turned to bitter rosemary ash over the heat of the fire. Next, I tried rubbing the outside of the roast with minced rosemary and garlic—about half the mixture immediately fell into the flames. I smeared the roast with a potent rosemary, garlic, and oil paste—it burned over the direct hot fire. I was running out of ideas when it occurred to me that maybe the paste would fare better inside the pork, where it could flavor every bite of the meat and at the same time be shielded from the incinerating heat.

I cut open the next roast, a method called butterflying, unfolded it like a book, spread the exposed surface with the rosemary paste, and then tightly rolled it back up and tied it shut. I brushed the roast's surface with olive oil to help it brown and to reduce sticking on the grill.

Not quite an hour later, my tasters dug in. This pork sure had flavor, but now it had too much of a good thing. The rosemary was so overpowering, it was downright medicinal. The next time I made the pork, I replaced some of the assertive rosemary with gentler fresh parsley. My reward was a browned, juicy pork loin with a robust yet balanced hit of garlic and herbs.

GRILLED ROSEMARY PORK LOIN

Serves 6 to 8

Freezing the pork for 30 minutes will make butterflying it much easier. Mincing the parsley, rosemary, and garlic makes for a homogenous filling.

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup minced fresh parsley
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons minced fresh rosemary
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- Salt and pepper
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 boneless pork loin roast ($2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 pounds), fat on top scored lightly

1. BUTTERFLY ROAST Combine parsley, rosemary, garlic, $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt, $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon pepper, and 2 tablespoons oil in bowl. Following photos 1 to 3, butterfly

pork roast and spread with herb mixture, leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch border on all sides. Roll tightly, then tie roast at 1-inch intervals with kitchen twine. (Roast can be wrapped tightly with plastic and refrigerated for 24 hours.)

2. HEAT GRILL Heat all burners on high, covered, for 15 minutes. (For charcoal grill, light 100 coals; when covered with fine gray ash, spread over half of grill. Set cooking grate in place and heat covered, with lid vent open completely, for 5 minutes.) Scrape and oil cooking grate.

3. GRILL AND SLICE Rub prepared roast all over with remaining oil and season with salt and pepper. Place roast opposite primary burner (for charcoal grill, place roast directly over coals) and grill until well browned all over, about 12 minutes. Arrange roast fat-side up, leave primary burner on high, and shut off other burner(s). (For charcoal grill, position roast fat-side up on cooler side of grill.) Cook, covered, until meat registers 140 degrees, 35 to 45 minutes. Transfer pork to cutting board, tent with foil, and let rest 15 minutes. The temperature will continue to rise. Remove twine, slice, and serve.

STEP-BY-STEP Herb Flavor in Every Bite

To flavor the pork roast from the inside out, we butterflied the loin and then spread the interior with a heady herb paste. The technique is easier with a relatively short, wide roast (about 7 to 8 inches long and 4 to 5 inches wide). Here's how we did it.



1. Place roast fat-side up on cutting board. Starting about 1 inch up from cutting board, cut horizontally, stopping about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch before edge.



2. Now cut into thicker half of roast again, starting about 1 inch from cutting board and stopping about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch before edge.



3. Spread herb mixture evenly over surface of butterflied roast, leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch border on all sides. Roll tightly and tie with kitchen twine.