

Seasonal Eating
Whitney Danhof, Extension Agent

.Green Tomatoes Perk Up Pork
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Sweet and sour is one of my favorite flavor combinations. Add a little heat and you have the perfect sauce or accompaniment for any meat. Our palates can taste five basic elements: sweet, sour, bitter, salty and umami. The best culinary dishes use these elements to balance each other to make a well-rounded flavor. This is why sweet and sour chicken is such a popular dish – in a good recipe, it creates an exciting, balanced, well-rounded flavor.

While Asian inspired sauces are one use of sweet and sour, there are also other ways to combine these flavors. Lemonade is an example with the sour lemon juice and the sugar. Vinaigrette salad dressings can also be a balance of these flavors with vinegar or lemon juice and honey. Even sweet pickle relish is a combination of sweet, sour and salty.



Chutney is another example. This is a chunky condiment originating in India. It is usually made with some kind of fruit, spices and vinegar (or other tart ingredient like tamarind) cooked down together. Chutney pairs well with meats and poultry or cheese. One of my favorite combinations is pork with chutney. Pork pairs well with fruits anyway and a mango, peach or pear chutney is always delicious over pork chops or roasted pork loin.

Another popular flavor for chutney is green tomato. It is a perfect use for the hard, tart and acidic tomatoes that replaces the fruit. They cook down and become tender and flavored with the sugar and vinegar and spices into a totally new creation. This year the gardens have had a hard time and I'm hearing that many people have green tomatoes filling their plants. The recipe below for Green Tomato Chutney is a great way to use up some of those tomatoes without having to wait for them to ripen. This is also a good recipe to use at the end of the season just before the first frost.

While the ingredient list seems long, most of it is spices that go into the chutney. This is actually a really simple recipe as it all goes into one pot and then simmers down. When the chutney is just about finished, start breading the pork as it only takes a few minutes to cook. I used boneless, center cut pork chops, but you can use pork tenderloin pounded out and pan fried or you can just roast a whole tenderloin or pork loin and serve slices with the chutney over the top. I used a ¼ teaspoon of red pepper flakes and it made a fairly spicy chutney. If you don't like spicy, you can use less or leave it out totally. The ginger will give a slight heat along with the mustard powder, so it will have plenty of flavor without the red pepper. If you don't have some of the spices, just leave them out and use what you have.

So, check your garden for those green tomatoes or go to the local farmers market or grocery store and simmer up a pot of green tomato chutney to perk up your pork chops this week. For more information and recipes check out the Seasonal Eating page at bedford.tennessee.edu.

Pan Fried Pork with Green Tomato Chutney

1 1/2 pounds green tomatoes (about 3 medium tomatoes), cored and diced
1 small onion, chopped (about 3/4 -1 cup)
6 tablespoons cider vinegar
1/2 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup raisins
2 tablespoons candied ginger
1 teaspoon mustard seeds
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
4 boneless, center cut pork chops, pounded to 1/4" thickness
kosher salt and black pepper
flour
egg, beaten with a little water
panko breadcrumbs
vegetable oil

In a saucepan, combine green tomatoes, onion, vinegar, sugar, raisins, ginger, mustard seeds, cinnamon, coriander, dry mustard, cloves, allspice, red pepper flakes and kosher salt. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and simmer until juices are reduced and thickened, about 1 hour.

Sprinkle pounded pork chops with a little kosher salt and black pepper. Dip in flour, then egg and then breadcrumbs. Heat about a 1/4" layer of vegetable oil in a large skillet. Add pork chops and cook over medium high heat, turning once, until golden brown and cooked through, about 3 minutes per side. Serve pork with chutney over the top.