



Tips for Brining Pork by Drew Brown

The best thing you can do to pork is brine it. Essentially, brining is a method that involves soaking the meat in a salt solution in order to season it throughout instead of just on the surface. By providing thorough, even seasoning, brining helps the meat retain moisture during cooking and results in a juicier, more tender finished product.

The basic brine is 1 gallon of water with 1 cup of salt and 1/2 cup of sugar. Bring this to a boil, cool it and put the meat in there for the appropriate amount of time depending on the size of the cut. That basic ration would produce more brine than most people would use so cut it down to fit whatever project you are working on.

For example, if you want to brine a couple of pork porterhouses, you would need about a quart of brine. For that you would dissolve 1/4 cup salt and 1/8 cup (2T) sugar in 4 cups water. Because the porterhouses are relatively thin, they will only need to brine for about 2 hours. When it's ready, take the meat out of the brine, pat it dry and cook. You could season with some freshly ground pepper but you won't need to add anymore salt. Cook on the grill or on the stove to desired doneness.

If you are planning to roast a whole pork loin or a shoulder you will need more brine and more time. It can take up to 8 hours for a larger cut of meat to fully brine.

There are plenty of ways to vary a brine too. The salt is the only constant. You can replace the water with apple cider or tea. You can also add aromatics like herbs, garlic, onions, peppercorns, orange peel, etc. instead of white sugar. There is no end to the ways that you can use brine to flavor pork. Good luck!