

Tonkatsu – Japanese Pork Cutlet



Here is my take on classic Japanese Tonkatsu (Breaded Pork Cutlet). Tasty, juicy and *oh so satisfying*. Normally deep fried but don't sweat it if you don't have a deep fryer as I will be pan frying this version.

Traditionally Tonkatsu is served topped with a Tonkatsu Sauce atop a bed of cabbage that may have a bit of rice vinegar mixed in for taste. That's really good but I'm going to give you a couple of ways to amp that up a bit and even *Western-ize* it a bit!

Use the best boneless Pork cutlets you can find. Heritage Berkshire (Japanese Kurobuta) Pork is perfect. As with any meat, "fat=flavor", so select your cutlets with a good bit of marbling, if you can find it.

Thickness doesn't matter too much, as you are going to pound it flat and thin anyway. Unless you are Sous Vide cooking a thick cutlet before frying pounding it flat and thin will enable you to cook it through safely in a pan.

You should be able to find all of the ingredients in almost any big supermarket.

If not a "Pork Fan" you can substitute a chicken breast for the Pork!

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What follows are my recipes for Tonkatsu, Tonkatsu Sauce, and Asian Slaw.

Mise en Place - Getting it All Together

Things will go more smoothly, and you will be less likely to forget anything, if you gather everything needed together before starting.

Equipment

Cutting Board (your **Meat Cutting Board** NOT your Veggie Board!)

Meat Mallet

Cutting Board (your **Veggie Cutting Board** NOT your Meat Board!)

Knife big enough to do the job

5 – Large, shallow plates

1 - Large non-stick heavy skillet

1 – Small saucepan

1 – Stirring spoon

1 – Medium Mixing Bowl

1 – Large Mixing Bowl

Measuring Cups and Spoons

Ingredients

Tonkatsu Cutlets

8 – 1-inch-thick boneless Pork Cutlets – Kurobuta/Berkshire recommended

Note: Need more? Buy more! Make more!

¾ - cup All-Purpose Flour

3 – Large Eggs

2 – 3 cups Japanese Panko Breadcrumbs (almost every big supermarket has Panko Breadcrumbs these days)

Salt to taste

Black Pepper to taste

Smoked Paprika (Optional)

1 scant tsp of Old Bay Seasoning (Optional)

Extra Virgin Olive Oil or Coconut Oil for frying (enough to come at least halfway up the breaded cutlet)

½ stick Unsalted Butter

Tonkatsu Sauce

While you can buy Tonkatsu, or Katsu Sauce, at almost any large supermarket or Asian food store, it's easy to make a tasty sauce of your own with just a few ingredients.

½ cup Ketchup

3 TBLS Soy Sauce

1 TBLS Dark Brown Sugar

1 TBLS Mirin (Japanese Sweet Cooking Wine – If you can't find Mirin just add a bit more Brown Sugar)

2 – 4 tsp Worcestershire Sauce to taste

½ Cup Saki

1 – 2 tsp grated Ginger

1 or 2 cloves of finely minced and smashed Garlic

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Asian Slaw

What makes this Asian slaw you ask? Well, the ingredients certainly! If you have any trouble finding any of the ingredients (you shouldn't) I'll list some alternatives where I prophesy the possibility of troubles :-)

- 1 - small head Green Cabbage or Napa Cabbage thinly sliced and then chopped twice
- ¼ cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 2 or 3 finely Julienned Carrots
- ½ Red Onion thinly sliced
- 1 cup of Bean Sprouts (Optional)

- 2 TBSP finely minced Ginger
- 1 TBLS finely minced garlic
- 2 TBLS Dark Brown Sugar
- 2 TBLS Mirin (Japanese Sweet Cooking Wine) – **Sub: a sweet white wine such as Muscat**
- 4 TBLS Soy Sauce
- ½ TBLS Sesame Oil (Look in the Asian section of your supermarket) **Sub: pound a few peanuts into a paste and mix with a few drops of Sesame Oil and add to the bowl. Or add 1 tsp of creamy peanut butter and mix it in.**
- ¼ cup of Rice Vinegar (Look in the Asian section of any big supermarket) **Sub: Apple Cider Vinegar**

Making the Tonkatsu Sauce

1. In a small saucepan mix all of the ingredients.
2. Cook over low heat until sauce thickens to about the consistency of gravy.
3. Remove from heat and set aside

Making the Asian Slaw

1. Cut the Cabbage into thin strips and cut/chop a couple of times until about a 1.5" to 2" in length and reserve in a large mixing bowl. Thinly julienne the Carrots and add to the Cabbage. Add the thinly sliced Onion to the bowl. Add the cup of Bean Sprouts, if using, to the bowl and give it all a quick toss.
2. In a small mixing bowl whisk together the finely minced Garlic, finely minced (or grated) Ginger, Brown Sugar, Mirin, Soy Sauce, Sesame Oil, and Rice Vinegar until well combined
3. Pour the dressing over the Slaw and toss until well combined. If you think there is not enough dressing, make another batch using the same ratio of ingredients as needed.
4. Hold covered until needed.

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Making the Tonkatsu

1. Depending on how big/thick your pork is cut you will likely have to pound them out. Use a piece of plastic wrap or Parchment Paper folded over with the cutlet in between. Using the flat side of a Meat Mallet pound it flat to about 3/8 inch thickness. If your cutlets start out extra thick you may have to cut them in half before pounding them out. After pounding to the desired thickness season both sides of the cutlets **LIGHTLY** with salt and pepper and place them on the first of the five plates (Holding Plate #1) and move to your dredging station.
2. Lay out three of the plates in a row on a flat work surface with the fourth plate holding flattened pork cutlets hanging out in the back left of the dredging station. The fifth plate will be your “Holding Plate #2” and should be set on the right side of your dredging station to receive the breaded, but uncooked cutlets.
3. Prepare your dredging ingredients;
 - a. Plate #1 - Pour the flour on the first plate (Left Side). Season the flour with Salt, Pepper and whatever other spices you are adding and mix to combine evenly.
 - b. Plate #2 - In a small bowl mix the 3 eggs with a fork and pour into the center of the second plate in line.
 - c. Plate #3 - Pour the Panko Breadcrumbs onto the third plate in line. If you season the breadcrumbs keep it very light as you are starting to pile up Salt and Pepper as you go.
4. Breading your cutlets should go something like this;
 - a. Plate #1 - Coat the cutlet with the seasoned flour mixture in Plate #1
 - b. Plate #2 - Move the flour coated cutlet to the second dish and completely coat with the egg.
 - c. Plate #3 - Move the cutlet to the final dish and completely coat with the Panko Breadcrumbs. If you are satisfied with your job place the completed cutlet assembly on the “Holding Plate #2” (Plate #5)
 - d. Repeat until all cutlets are breaded. Add to your Flour, Egg or Breadcrumbs as needed to finish all of the cutlets
5. Place the cooking oil and the butter in the cooking pan and turn to Medium Heat. When the butter has melted and the cooking oil/butter hot (but not smoking) place one or two of the cutlets into the hot oil. You should get some sizzle action. Its important to NOT CROWD THE PAN. If your pan can comfortably hold more than two cutlets at a time.... then fine, go for it! Cook the cutlets for about 3 min and carefully flip them using tongs and cook for about 3 more minutes. Carefully monitor the cooking turning down the heat if the breading is turning too dark.... Don't Burn That Breading! As you cook the next batch the oil will start out hotter than the previous batch and you will have to be even more vigilant!
6. As the cutlets cook, place them on a drying rack/drip rack with a couple of paper towels underneath to cool.

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7. Best served and eaten hot/warm!

Plating

Put a generous helping of the Asian Slaw on the plate and place one of the Tonkatsu Cutlets on top of, or propped against, the Slaw. Drizzle the Katsu Sauce on top of the cutlet and serve.



Don't let the name scare you off! Just because I snuck a little Japanese in there doesn't mean you shouldn't try it! Just call it a Breaded Pork Cutlet if you like!

Tasty and buttery, tender and melt in your mouth good, this is the absolute best way I have found to enjoy a Pork Cutlet.