

## HOW TO MAKE THE HOMEMADE DEEP FRIED BREADED PORK TENDERLOIN SANDWICH

The fried breaded pork tenderloin sandwich owes its roots to *Wiener Schnitzel*, the German recipe for breaded and fried veal cutlets. It is believed the first pork tenderloin sandwich was created by Nick Freienstein in 1904 selling them out of a street cart. In 1908 he opened Nick's Kitchen, a cafe in Huntington, Indiana. He originally called

them veal sandwiches. Whether they were veal then is unknown to us today but they definitely evolved as the deep fried breaded pork tenderloin sandwich we know.



The photo tutorials are my attempts to make this delicious sandwich in different ways. I believe I have achieved very good results equal to anything I have tasted in the many restaurants I have visited of about 140 different ones as of this writing.

The following is my recommended recipe along with optional ingredients and preparatory methods.



Nick Freienstein at Nick's Kitchen

## **Ingredients to make 4 (or more) pork tenderloin sandwiches:**

*1 pork tenderloin (about 20-24 ounces)  
4 sandwich buns or Kaiser rolls  
1 gallon canola oil if deep fat frying  
1 quart buttermilk for the marinade  
2 whole eggs for the marinade (optional)  
1/4 cup of white flour for the marinade plus as needed for flouring meat  
Salt and black or white pepper for the marinade to suit taste  
1 tablespoon dry mustard for the marinade  
1 or 2 cloves of freshly chopped garlic for the marinade  
Pinch of Emeril's Original Essence seasoning or Cayenne for punch for the marinade  
1 package of Japanese bread crumbs (Panko) or Saltine crackers food processed for the breading as needed  
Sliced tomato, sliced onion, lettuce, mustard, mayonnaise, and pickle condiments to suit*

Buy a pork tenderloin, not pork loins or pork chops. Pork loins could be an acceptable substitute but not pork chops. Pork loin is what you get when you order one of those hang over the bun platter size midwest tenderloins in most restaurants. However, the pork tenderloin is the leanest and tenderest part of the pork. To make four sandwiches you need a pork tenderloin of about 1-1/2 pounds. Typically they are about as thick as a person's wrist and about 10-12 inches long and packaged in pairs.

## **Recommended Pork Tenderloin**



Typical Tenderloin Package



Tenderloins Unpacked

## Optional Pork Loin Cuts



Optional Precut Boneless Pork Loin



Mr. Dave's (Dave Clapp) with more pork loin than you'll ever need at home

## Preparing the Meat

Remove all the white silverskin and trim the fat. Cut the tenderloin in four pieces of about 4 to 6 ounces each. You can easily pound the pieces flat with the smooth side of a meat tenderizer mallet to a depth of about 1/4 to 3/8 inches. The standard piece comes out at about 5 inches by 6-8 inches. They should and will be bigger than standard sandwich bun. If you butterfly cut the pieces you can pound out a traditional "hanger over" the bun tenderloin of about 4-5 inches wide by up to 10 inches long.



Butterfly Cut



Pounded Flat





To pound the tenderloin to flatten it to about 1/4" to 3/8" thick and to tenderize the meat, place between two pieces of wax paper, plastic, clear wrap or use a large clear food storage bag.



First dredge and coat the flattened tenderloins in flour. Flour is essentially a paste that is going to make the marinade and breading stick to the meat better. You may have learned about flour paste in kindergarten. You certainly learned if you ever cleaned a bread mixing bowl.



Prepare the marinade (or batter) with two eggs, a quart of buttermilk, about 1/4 cup flour, a pinch of salt and pepper, fresh finely chopped garlic, and a tablespoon of dry mustard. For added punch some Emeril's Original Essence seasoning or Cayenne can be used. I like to throw a dash of it in. I have also tried beer, milk and eggnog for marinades. They work but read on.

***Use buttermilk and marinate the tenderloins OVERNIGHT!***



Here is the secret. Use buttermilk and marinate the tenderloins OVERNIGHT! This is the secret I learned from Nick's Kitchen. Emeril does it as well when he marinates and deep fries. I am not an expert but it worked testing with the same cut of meat both ways to taste the difference.

Marinating transforms the tenderloin into a super tasty and tender piece by denaturing or unwinding the protein strings. If you don't have the time some recipes say flour the tenderloin then dip in the batter just before breading and that works OK, but take the extra overnight step. That is what makes it superb and separates it from the average or even good tenderloin.

For the breading you can use commercial bread crumbs such as Shore Lunch Original, yellow corn meal, saltine crackers or Panko Japanese bread crumbs. Crushed or food processed saltines give you a light and fluffy breading. I found Panko Japanese bread crumbs to be slightly better than the rest. At times I have blended in a little bit of the yellow corn meal with the primary selected crumbs. It gives it some extra crunchiness.



Take the tenderloin out of the marinade with tongs and let the excess drip off. Place the tenderloin on top of a bed of breading, then fluff breading on top and then press the tenderloin into the breading. Turn over and repeat to make sure you have complete coverage. Let the breaded tenderloins set for a while. I try to bread a couple hours ahead of frying and store them in the refrigerator.

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in the refrigerator.***

The refrigeration rest sets the breading to further ensure it will stick to the marinade better when frying.

## Frying

Preheat a deep fat fryer to 360 degrees F. using canola oil or peanut oil. Canola and peanut oil are two of the healthier oils and have no trans-fats. You need oil suitable for the high heat and most other oils have lower flash and smoking points as well as trans-fats. It takes almost a gallon for my fryer. You can pan fry by pouring in about a 1/4 inch of oil but I prefer the deep fryer for better control. Deep fry the tenderloin for approximately 3 minutes or slightly more or until golden brown. If fried right it should not be greasy or soggy. Pan or skillet frying may require turning the meat over about half way through and requires closer watching.



Start to finish in about 3 minutes until golden brown at 360 degrees. Lifting the basket out of the oil allows the oil to drip off the tenderloin.



If you are frying for a party you can fry a couple at a time in a deep fryer. Here is a stack of nine tenderloins that took less than half an hour for one of our holiday parties. This is also how many I got out of that package of two tenderloins. You can put them in a warming oven until time to serve.

You are now ready to prepare the sandwich. I prefer the bigger sandwich buns over standard hamburger buns. Condiments can be sliced tomato, onion, lettuce, mustard or mayonnaise. I like a sandwich pickle slice mostly for a punctuation decoration.

This may be blasphemy for some, but experiment. You might surprise yourself with Sriracha sauce. It works at Lyon's Pub on 6th in Minneapolis. Many restaurants have their own proprietary sauces. You may want to try a Dawson's on Main in Speedway, Indiana knockoff. Mix mayonnaise half and half with Sweet Baby Rae's BBQ sauce.

**Enjoy!**



At home, presentation is important. This one is served on a Welsh place mat complemented with Old Peculier at Christmas. A stabbed pickle is a traditional accent.

You can certainly make a breaded tenderloin sandwich somewhat easier than I described here but the idea is to make a sandwich with the overnight buttermilk marinade, the extra care of resting the breading and using the best breading ingredients available that you may never or rarely come across in a restaurant. Otherwise, what's the point since you can get one for \$3.99 delivered by a cute carhop on roller skates?



## VARIATIONS AND MORE INFORMATION

### The Right Tool

To tenderize and pound a pork tenderloin flat for deep frying you need a heavy wide head hammering device of some sort. I've used three different tools so far and have found the right tool though it may be unconventional.



The first tool I used was this hand held sledge hammer that dates back to the 50's. I first used it to pound out dents in a 1949 Volkswagen Beetle that I bought in 1959 for \$100 before I was old enough to drive. It was part of my father's auto body tools that I inherited in 1986. Since I haven't pounded out a dent since that Volkswagen it just became another tool taking up space in my garage. Without a claw it did not have much utility in carpentry projects. The hammer had a certain amount of nostalgia and connectivity with my memories of my father

to keep. On my first tenderloin attempt I quickly discovered we had no tenderizing tool in our kitchen. So this first came to mind, I resurrected this from the garage and cleaned it thoroughly and it did the job well.



Then for a while I went conventional using this kitchen tenderizing tool. I thought maybe I should be a little more professional and have the right tool for the job with a slightly bigger and flat head. It worked fine just as it was intended. I used the flat side shown and did not use the serrated side since the idea was to pound tenderloins flat and smooth and not destroy them. One of these can be found in any kitchen supply store. This particular one came from a Target store.

I was conflicted. I had a nostalgic sense of joy using the sledge hammer but the bought tenderizing tool did a better job. Then the light above my head went on and I headed back out to the garage. I had the perfect tenderizing tool! The Marples No. 7715 Mallet made in Marples, England is what I now intend to use. The label says:

*"The head of this mallet is made from Beechwood specially selected on account of the sandy ground on which it is grown. The shaft is tough English Ash, known for centuries for its strength and resilience. The coat of polish protects the tool from damp and dirt."*



This is the mallet I used with a 2 inch wide wood chisel to cut more than 880 heavy timber frame joints for our house and to pound the wood pegs to join the mortise and tenon joinery. It got heavy use for over 6 months as you can see by the photo. The head is bigger than the tenderizing tool at about 3-1/2 inches square so it does the job quite effectively.

That's it. One bought and two right under my nose. Had I been more alert I probably would have started out with the Marples mallet but this gives you an idea of all the possibilities. In my mind those tenderloin sandwiches taste better knowing they were pounded flat with the Marples mallet and my nostalgic sense of joy was restored



Tenderizing the meat by pounding it flat is the ultimate expression. Many restaurants have resorted to mechanical meat tenderizers that are kind of like passing the meat through an old fashion washing machine wringer. Not Rusty's at Dahlia Street in Palmer, Alaska. They use this custom forged solid steel "**Hog Hurter**" mallet. The lore of pounding the tenderloin extends to Michael Stern's (of Roadfood books fame) account of Nick Freienstein's brother Jake who lost his fingers to frostbite and took to pounding the tenderloin with his

fingerless fist in Nick's Kitchen. It was an interesting story that emphasizes the main ritual and gratification of making your own tenderloins. Thus, the right tool.

## About Fryers

You can certainly pan fry and I will show you an example, but if you want that uniform golden brown even fry, a deep fat fryer is your best choice. I bought a stainless steel rectangular fryer with a lift basket and digital controls for precise temperature settings. The fryer is designed to hold a gallon of cooking oil. The fryer is essentially a miniature countertop version of commercial restaurant deep fryers. There are many companies that make the fryers that range from about \$50 to \$130. They look like this:



Target, Walmart, Williams Sonoma, etc., all carry a version.

The fryer basket is rectangular and will easily hold a flattened piece of meat pounded from the pork tenderloin cut. It will not get you one of those huge platter size restaurant tenderloins made from a pork loin cut.

I recommend staying away from those round shaped plastic fryers. They are harder to clean and won't hold the pounded butterfly rectangular sized tenderloin.



Yes, you can achieve a hangover the bun tenderloin from the pork tenderloin cut of meat.



## Pan Frying

It can be done on your stove top preferably with a cast iron skillet filled with about 1/4" of oil. It is difficult to judge and control the temperature of the oil so I prefer to cook outside with a propane burner for the same reason for frying a turkey outside. Flashover.



Pan frying requires careful attention and turning the tenderloin over once. A pair of tongs is essential. Don't use a spatula.



Results of my first pan fry attempt



My first pan fried tenderloin

## Are you ready for some football! . . . and some Mini Slider Tenderloins?

There had been numerous inquiries and discussions in 2007 about serving snacks for Super Bowl parties centered on the signature foods of the two cities, Chicago and Indianapolis. It seemed most could quickly suggest the famous Chicago deep dish pizza or the Chicago style hot dogs for Chicago but then most people outside the Hoosier State were stumped about Indianapolis. I drew the line in making my suggestion. It was not corn on the cob or popcorn, fried chicken, beans and corn bread or green bean casserole; and save the sugar cream pie for dessert. It was the famous Indiana breaded pork tenderloin sandwich -- a sandwich that has its roots in Indiana and was very popular throughout the breadbasket Heartland of the Midwest, but was relatively unknown beyond.

The problem was the breaded pork tenderloin sandwich was one giant of a sandwich if done right to live up to its reputation and would fill you up, muscle out other snacks and have you napping by the fourth quarter of the big game. I didn't think anyone wanted that. So, to make it more feasible, here is what I came up with, the **mini slider pork tenderloin sandwich appetizer**. What is it? It is a mini deep-fried breaded pork tenderloin sandwich of about a minimum of 2 inches to not more than 4 inches in size and served with small dinner rolls or mini hamburger buns.



I started with a package of pork tenderloins, the typically prepackaged ones in pairs. Normally I can get about four sandwiches out of one tenderloin but in making the mini I found I could easily get twelve or more tenderloin pieces out of one by simply cross cutting pieces not more than 3/4 inches thick.



Pounded flat they ranged from nearly 3" by 4" from the thickest part down to about 2" x 3" toward the end. They ended up about 1/4" thick on the average with three quick poundings with my favored Marples mallet.

They were just right for the small 2" x 2" dinner rolls I planned to use.



Marinating and breading was the same as for the larger standard pork tenderloin sandwiches.



In frying I found I could batch fry several at a time in my deep fryer anywhere from four to six. I used a deep fryer but I think these are small enough that you could easily fry them in a skillet. I fried them 3 minutes at 360 degrees F.



The buns are Sara Lee Classic Dinner Rolls that come 12 to a package and have to be sliced. In the intervening years the mini slider sandwiches have become quite popular in restaurants and now you can find mini hamburger buns in grocery stores.



Here they are! This could be a hit at a party at any time. You don't have to wait for Indianapolis to get back to the Super Bowl.



Bon appetit, or just dig in. As Gusteau said in the movie, *Ratatoulli*, “Anyone can cook.”

**David Stovall**

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All sandwiches shown in this document were homemade by David Stovall.

David Stovall has been pursuing and documenting pork tenderloin sandwiches for several years and as of the publication of this writing in July 2013 writing has sampled tenderloins in over 140 different restaurants in over 20 states and provinces of the USA and Canada. An active group of fellow pursuers can be found on Facebook at:

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/39165973462/>