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Pork Chops with Mustard Sauce

You can always sauté pork chops and serve them with Dijon mustard – for the *bonne femme* on a busy day, a great Dijon mustard can stand in as a sauce. But for about 3 minutes more of your time, you can whisk that mustard into a smooth, luscious sauce. The result is the sort of simple but slightly refined dish you'd spot as a *plat du jour* on a 10-euro menu in some charming little town you happened to pass through during lunchtime in the French countryside. You might forget the name of the town, but you'd always remember how tickled you were at finding such a simple, satisfying dish in the proverbial middle of nowhere – such is traveling the back roads of France.

The cream is optional, but it helps smooth out the sauce. And do watch the salt. Many Dijon mustards are already salty, so you may not need as much salt as you usually use.

For two variations on this theme, add either *cornichons* (French sour pickles) or capers – easy stir-ins that add just enough *je ne sais quoi* to make the dish really sing.

Makes 4 Servings

4 bone-in pork loin chops (1/2 inch thick)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 large shallot, finely chopped (about 1/4 cup)
3/4 cup low-sodium chicken broth
3/4 cup dry white wine
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
1 tablespoon heavy cream (optional)
2 tablespoons snipped fresh parsley

1. Season both sides of the pork chops with salt and pepper. In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Add the pork chops, reduce the heat to medium, and cook, turning once, until slightly pink inside (145°F), 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer the pork chops to a platter and cover with foil to keep warm.

2. Drain off all but a sheen of fat from the skillet. Add the shallot to the pan and sauté briefly, until translucent. Add the broth and the wine to the skillet, stirring with a whisk to loosen any browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Bring to a boil and boil until the liquid is reduced to 1/2 cup – this should take 4 to 5 minutes, depending on the heat and your pan size. Whisk in the mustard and butter. Bring to a boil and whisk in the cream (if you like) and the parsley.

3. Divide the chops among four dinner plates, spoon the sauce over the chops, and serve.

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Pork Chops with Mustard Sauce, continued

Variations

Pork Chops with *Cornichon*-Mustard Sauce. Stir 1/4 cup julienned *cornichons* into the finished sauce and gently heat through.

Pork Chops with Mustard-Caper Sauce. Add 1/4 teaspoon crushed dried *herbes de Provence* when you add the shallot. Stir 1/4 cup drained capers into the finished sauce.