

Slow-Cooker Pulled Pork

Serves 8

Cooking pork shoulder in a slow cooker rewards you with no-fuss, flavorful, meltingly tender meat, perfect for making sandwiches, tacos, or enchiladas, a dish easy enough for a teenager to make. If you don't have a slow cooker, you can bake the pork, prepared the same way, in a covered casserole in a 325-degree oven for about three hours (it's done when you lift it in the pot with a fork and it's fall-apart tender). Or use a stovetop or electric pressure cooker, timing it according to the manufacturer's instructions. The slow cooker takes about seven hours on low and you can make it one day, refrigerate it overnight, skim off the fat, and reheat it the next day. If you're preparing the pork and eating it the same day, skim off the fat from the cooking juices with a large spoon or fat separator, then simmer the juices briefly to thicken them. Spoon the cooking juices or barbecue sauce over the pork for extra flavor. For pulled pork sandwiches, layer the meat on burger buns or bulkie rolls with sliced pickles and coleslaw for crunch. For tacos, warm a stack of corn or flour tortillas and serve with pickled veggies, slaw, or kimchi. Or serve the pork with rice and beans or mix it with sauteed vegetables. Leftover pulled pork (moistened with some of the reduced cooking juices) can be refrigerated in an airtight container for about five days.

- 4 pounds boneless pork shoulder, or a piece up to 5 pounds (or pork butt)
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, unpeeled and smashed with the side of a knife
- 1 can (about 15 ounces) whole or diced tomatoes
- ¼ cup light brown sugar
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- ¼ cup barbecue sauce
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon chile powder

1. Have on hand a large (5- or 6-quart) slow cooker, a medium saucepan, and a strainer that fits into the saucepan. You also need a large metal spoon or a fat separator, if you have one.
2. Remove any netting or string from around the pork. Cut off and discard any large outer pieces of fat.
3. In the slow cooker, combine the onion, garlic, tomatoes, brown sugar, vinegar, and barbecue sauce. Place the pork on top and sprinkle with salt, pepper, and chile powder.
4. Cover the slow cooker and cook on the low setting for 7 hours. To test the meat for doneness: Insert a kitchen fork into the meat, in a few different places, and it should be fall-apart tender. If there is any resistance, cook the meat for another 30 to 60 minutes. When the meat is very tender, turn off the slow cooker, uncover, and let stand for about 10 minutes.
5. Using tongs or a slotted spoon, transfer the pork (it will probably be in large chunks) to a baking dish. When it's cool enough to handle, use your fingers or a fork to pull or shred the meat into bite-size chunks. Discard all the clumps of fat, which you'll be able to feel with your fingers.
6. Set the saucepan on the counter and place the strainer in it. Carefully ladle the cooking liquid from the slow cooker into the strainer. Discard the solids in the strainer. Wait about 5 minutes for the liquid in the saucepan to settle. Use a large spoon to skim off the fat from the surface (you can also do this in a fat separator).
7. About 10 minutes before serving, place the saucepan with the cooking liquid over high heat. Bring to a boil, lower the heat to medium, and simmer for 6 minutes, or until the sauce reduces and thickens slightly. Taste for seasoning and add more salt, if you like. Pour some of this sauce over the pulled pork to moisten it.
8. When serving the pork, pass the remaining reduced sauce or barbecue sauce at the table.

Lisa Zwiern



Notes from Mary Menino:
After making this recipe this week, I can say that it is extremely easy and not fussy. Consider doubling the barbecue sauce to ½ cup for a stronger flavor. Buns will be provided. You can pour sauce over the shredded pork.