

Reimagined Danish Roast Pork and Crackling Sandwich

A classic Danish roast pork sandwich made from pork belly or pork loin with crackling, from a fast-food stand is usually piled high with meat, crackling, pickled red cabbage, pickled slices of cucumber, and lots of gravy. It is one of Denmark's best-known traditional sandwiches and is widely considered a national favorite. But it is essentially an attempt to squeeze a typical Danish Christmas dinner between two halves of a burger bun, without much thought as to whether it actually tastes good—or could be made better.



Some people probably find that the gravy and pickled red cabbage add so much moisture that the sandwich falls apart, while the pickled red cabbage can also overpower the other flavors.

So how can we rethink the roast pork sandwich as a dish in its own right—one that is delicious, well balanced, and full of interesting textures?

INGREDIENTS (per sandwich):

- 1–2 slices roast pork with crackling, preferably pork loin roast or pork belly roast
- 1–2 extra pieces of crackling strips from the roast, cut in half
- 1 brioche sandwich bun
- 5 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons pickled red cabbage
- 3 tablespoons brown gravy, homemade or store-bought
- ½ teaspoon red currant jelly
- ½ teaspoon arrowroot powder (or a small cornstarch slurry)
- 3 slices pickled cucumber or pickles
- 3 thin half-slices fresh apple
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 4–6 potato chips

CHALLENGES AND TRICKS

For extra crunch, tuck a few halved pieces of crackling into the center of the sandwich. Add a handful of potato chips as well: besides their crisp texture, they contribute a little extra salt that helps bring out the other flavors.

Plain brown gravy would be too thin, so we add a little arrowroot powder to thicken it until it is almost spreadable. Arrowroot is a natural starch. Although it has been used for thousands of years, today it

is especially common as a substitute for flour or potato starch in gluten-free foods. It is flavorless and turns clear, so it will not make a transparent sauce cloudy the way cornstarch can. It is also widely used in sauces. It is usually mixed with cold water to make a slurry, but here we whisk it directly into the gravy with the red currant jelly. The jelly, often paired with game sauces, adds a fresh sweet-tart note.

Because pickled red cabbage can be both strongly flavored and quite wet, we stir a small amount into mayonnaise. The mayonnaise captures some of the liquid, softens the cabbage flavor, and adds creaminess. Finally, thin slices of apple bring sweetness, acidity, and crisp texture to the sandwich.

Salty: crackling, potato chips, brown gravy

Sweet: pork, mayonnaise, apple slices, red currant jelly, pickled cucumber, red cabbage, burger bun

Acidic: pickled cucumber, pickled red cabbage, apple slices, red currant jelly

Umami: roast pork, brown gravy (stock)

Richness: roast pork, mayonnaise, brown gravy

PREPARATION

First, you need a roast pork joint with crisp crackling. This method cooks the pork at a slightly lower temperature for a little longer than normal to help keep the meat juicy:

1. Using a sharp knife to deepen the scores in the rind so the strips are fully separated from one another. Be careful not to cut too deep, where you cut into the meat!
2. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon salt in the bottom of a roasting pan, then place the pork rind-side down on top. Add peppercorns and bay leaves, if desired.
3. Pour boiling water into the pan until the rind is completely submerged.
4. Roast in a preheated convection oven at 400°F (200°C) for 20 minutes.



5. Remove the pan from the oven and turn the pork rind-side up. Rub 1–2 tablespoons salt thoroughly over and between the scored strips of rind. The surface will be very hot; use a spoon, or protect your hand with a cotton glove covered by a nitrile glove.



6. Prop up the roast with whole or halved small potatoes so the rind is as level as possible. The top should be nearly horizontal.



7. Reduce the convection oven temperature to 350°F (180°C) and continue roasting. Rotate the pan occasionally for even cooking.
8. After about 30 minutes, baste the pork with the liquid in the pan to keep it from drying out.



9. After about 60–70 minutes, once the internal temperature is above 167°F (75°C), increase the convection oven temperature to 425 to 465°F (220 to 240°C). Roast until the crackling puffs and becomes extra crisp, watching carefully so it does not burn.



10. Transfer the pork to a cutting board and let it rest, uncovered, for about 20 minutes.



While the pork rests, prepare the remaining sandwich components:

1. Stir the mayonnaise and pickled red cabbage together in a bowl.



2. Whisk together the brown gravy, red currant jelly, and arrowroot powder or a cornstarch slurry. Heat until briefly simmering or boiling, then cook just until thickened.



3. Quarter the apple and remove the core. Slice the apple quarters into very thin slices. Toss with a little lemon juice to prevent browning.



4. Once the pork has rested for about 20 minutes, cut several slices with the crackling still attached.

Remove the crackling from another section of the roast. Trim away any excess fat, then cut the crackling strips in half crosswise.



5. To assemble the sandwich, spread a generous tablespoon of red cabbage mayonnaise over the bottom bun and a generous tablespoon of thickened gravy over the top bun.



6. Place about 3 slices of pickled cucumber on the bottom bun and 4–6 potato chips on the top bun.



7. Place one slice of roast pork on the bottom bun and add a few extra pieces of crackling. Arrange the apple slices on the top bun. You can add more pork, but do not overfill the sandwich: the suggested amounts are well balanced, and the finished sandwich is easy to eat with your hands—no knife and fork required.
8. Close the sandwich and serve immediately.





Photo XX: A Reimagined Roast Pork Sandwich—a Uniquely Danish Specialty!