



# *All About* **RIBS** *with* **Ontario Pork**

Ribs are always in great demand, especially during the summer. Knowing the functional and culinary aspects of ribs will ensure that operators realize their full flavour, texture, and value.



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# Rib Cuts

## BACK RIBS



Back ribs come from the loin section. They are the same bones that you find on pork loin chops. The bones, or ribs, are smaller and more rounded in cross section than those of side ribs. Back ribs generally demand a greater price than side ribs as they are more tender and have a greater meat-to-bone ratio.

## BABY BACK RIBS

These are identical in every way to regular back ribs.



## BACK RIB TAILS (BUTTON BONES)

The back rib tail, or button bones, a by-product of the back ribs, is removed and sold separately. There are four quarter (coin) sized flat bones per back rib tail. Back rib tails, sometimes incorrectly called “riblets”, can be served in one strip or divided into individual, mouth-sized portions, one rib portion at a time.

## SIDE RIBS



Side ribs lie directly adjacent to the belly, running from the point at which back ribs end to the breastbone (sternum). The breastbone and most flank meat are usually removed before packing and should always be removed for service.

Side ribs are slightly less tender, and have marginally lower meat-to-bone ratio than back ribs. For these reasons they are generally less expensive than back ribs, but side rib meat is more flavourful than back rib meat.

## SPARE RIBS

An alternative name for side ribs and more common in the United States.

## Preparing and Cooking Ribs

Ribs are cooked perfectly when the meat comes away from the bones cleanly, and is flavoursome, juicy and succulent.

On the concave (non-meaty side) surface of all ribs is a thin translucent membrane (peritoneum). This membrane is tough and impervious. Removing it allows topical seasonings or sauces to penetrate the meat and improves eating quality.

To remove the membrane: insert a metal spoon handle under the membrane at one end of the rib rack between the ribs, pry up and detach a corner. Then, with a paper towel, grab the detached flap and gently tear it away from the ribs. It should come off in one clean pull. Remove flank meat and breastbone from side ribs.

Ribs can be served wet – i.e. with a barbecue sauce, which is applied during the final 15 minutes of grilling, or dry, in which case a spice rub is used and can be applied to the uncooked ribs.

## Using a Conventional Oven

Apply dry rub, if desired. Place ribs on a roasting pan with half an inch or so of liquid, (such as stock, juice or beer) to add flavour, or add aromatics and/or sliced citrus fruit to the water. Cover roasting pan with foil. Bake in oven at 325°F (160°C) until tender, and meat begins to recede from bone tips. Back ribs should take about one hour and side ribs about an hour and a half. This method preserves the moisture and flavour much more effectively than boiling ribs – which is discouraged.

At this stage ribs can be refrigerated for up to three days. They can now be grilled to re-heat and to apply barbecue sauce during the final 15 minutes. Grill over low heat to avoid burning sweet barbecue sauces.

Ribs can also be finished in the oven: place steamed ribs on a baking tray and cook at 325°F (160°C) until thoroughly heated through, brushing with sauce frequently.

### ST. LOUIS RIBS



St. Louis ribs are the side ribs which have the breastbone removed, and are trimmed into a neat rectangular shape. To remove the breastbone, locate the white cartilage at the top (shoulder end) of the side rib. Cut straight through the cartilage to remove the breastbone and cartilage. As St. Louis Ribs comprise 12 ribs, they are perfect for half or quarter racks.

### SWEET & SOUR RIBS



Approximately two inches is cut lengthwise from the side rib rack nearest to the back rib (centre portion). Prepare using the same methods as described for side ribs. Perfect for hors d'oeuvres and finger food.



### COUNTRY-STYLE RIBS

Rarely found in food service, Country-style ribs are the same cut as the bone-in rib roast, except that a longitudinal cut is made through the ribs and then butterflied open (chine and feather bones removed). Country-style ribs can be roasted or braised as a rib roast, or cut into fingers for grilling.

### BBQ-STYLE RIBLETS



Regular riblets are trimmed off the shoulder blade close to the bone. BBQ style riblets are trimmed to leave about 1/4 inch of meat on the riblet bones. Riblets should be simmered until tender prior to grilling. Regular riblets make an excellent addition to pasta sauce, especially when cooked to falling-off-the-bone succulence. Riblets are economical and very tasty.

Back ribs can be cooked very slowly from raw on the grill, in a smoker, or in the oven, but it is more practical in foodservice to pre-cook them, using the methods described earlier.

Side ribs must be pre-cooked before grilling. As side ribs are less tender than back ribs, they will take longer to cook, but otherwise there is no difference in cooking techniques between side and back ribs.

### *Back Rib Tails (Button Bones)*

As back rib tails form part of the untrimmed back rib, they can be prepared by the same methods described here for back ribs.

## BUYING GUIDE

Look for ribs with as much meat covering the ribs as possible. Rib racks that have been trimmed right down to the bone (on the convex surface) are less of a bargain.

Unless you have a use for the breastbone portion of side ribs, specify 'breastbone removed'.

Availability is variable. Some operators negotiate prices and quantities well in advance to ensure price and supply continuity.

## Some Serving Suggestions

Baked sweet or regular potatoes	Grilled sweet corn
Coleslaw	French fries
Watermelon	Grilled or fresh fruit
Creamy or German potato salad	Cornbread muffins
Tomato, mixed, or green salad	Baked beans





## Honey Garlic Back Ribs

### Ingredients

- **2** racks of Ontario pork back ribs, about 3 lbs/1.5 kg
- **2** lemons
- **1/2 cup (125 mL)** EACH liquid honey, cider vinegar, and ketchup
- **1/3 cup (75 mL)** soy sauce
- **2 Tbsp (30 mL)** minced garlic
- **2 tsp (10 mL)** EACH Tabasco or hot chili sauce, garlic powder

### Cooking Instructions

1. Pre-heat oven to 325°F (160°C). Using a spoon, lift the membrane from a corner of the rib bones on the non-meaty underside, and gently peel it away from the ribs and discard. Place ribs in a single layer in a baking tray or dish, meaty side up. Add 2 cups (500 mL) of hot water to the tray. Slice lemons and place slices on top of ribs.
2. Cover with foil and bake in oven for about 1 hour, or until meat is easily pierced with a sharp knife, and is beginning to pull away from the rib bones. At this stage ribs can be cooled, covered and refrigerated for up to 3 days.
3. Pre-heat barbecue to medium-low, or oven to 375°F (190°C). Prepare sauce: Combine all remaining ingredients in a saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes, or until sauce thickens slightly.
4. Place ribs on grill and baste with sauce. Keep basting and turning ribs for about 20 minutes or until ribs are thoroughly heated. Slice and serve.



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