

This is an amazing recipe. See my notes below.

Balsamic-Glazed Oven-Baked Ribs

Recipe from Animal

Adapted by Steven Raichlen

Total Time 2½ hours

Rating ★★★★★ (1,261)



Andrew Scrivani for The New York Times

Conventional wisdom holds that pork ribs taste best when cooked outdoors on a grill or smoker. Conventional wisdom hasn't experienced the sweet-sour balsamic-glazed St. Louis-cut spare ribs at Animal in Los Angeles. The restaurant's chefs, Jon Shook and Vinny Dotolo, prepare them in a way that most barbecue purists would never order, much less eat: baked in the oven. Here, their recipe has been adapted for the home cook. —**Steven Raichlen**

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 servings

FOR THE RIBS

- 2 spare-rib racks, the smallest you can find 5 to 6 pounds total
- 2 tablespoons grapeseed or canola oil
- Kosher salt
- 4 large flat-leaf parsley sprigs
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled and gently crushed
- 4 thyme sprigs

FOR THE BARBECUE SAUCE

- 1 cup balsamic vinegar, or to taste
- 1 cup ketchup
- 6 ounces (½ can) your favorite beer
- ¼ cup honey
- 3 tablespoons grainy mustard
- 1 tablespoon molasses
- 1½ teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon Tabasco sauce, or to taste
- ¼ cup dark brown sugar, or to taste
- ½ red onion, diced
- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- Salt

PREPARATION

FOR THE RIBS

Step 1

To prepare the ribs, heat the oven to 350 degrees. If the butcher has not removed the membrane on the back of each rack, gently pry it up by sliding a sharp implement (like the tip of an instant-read thermometer) under it, then lifting gently. Grab the membrane with a paper towel and peel it off.

Step 2

Spread a 24-inch sheet of heavy-duty aluminum foil, shiny side up, on a work surface. Place one rack on top, rub it all over with oil, and generously season both sides with salt. Place 2 parsley sprigs and 2 garlic cloves under the concave side of the rack and 2 thyme sprigs on top. Wrap the ribs in the foil, pleating the edges to seal well. Repeat with the second rack. Place the rib packets in a large roasting pan.

Step 3

Roast the ribs for 30 minutes, then reduce the temperature to 250 degrees. Cook 1½ to 2 hours more, until the meat has shrunk back from the ends of the bones by ¼ to ½ inch and the ribs are tender enough to pull apart with your fingers.

Step 4

Meanwhile, prepare the barbecue sauce. Place the balsamic vinegar in a large nonreactive saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat and cook until reduced by a third. Add the remaining barbecue sauce ingredients with ¼ cup water, bring back to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer until thick, 30 to 40 minutes. If the sauce starts to thicken too much, add a little water. The sauce should be highly seasoned; adjust to taste by adding vinegar, brown sugar or salt.

Step 5

Remove the ribs from the oven and let cool briefly, then open the foil, being careful of the escaping steam. Transfer the ribs to a baking sheet. Turn on the broiler or raise the oven to 450 degrees.

Step 6

Slather the ribs on both sides with the barbecue sauce. Broil the ribs until the sauce sizzles and browns, 2 to 4 minutes on each side. Alternatively, bake in the oven 8 to 12 minutes. Baste with the barbecue sauce and serve at once with any remaining sauce on the side.

This is absolutely terrific. One of two pork ribs recipe I make (the other is apple-glazed pork ribs), and I don't know which one I like better. One important caveat is finding the right balsamic vinegar. I usually use one that comes in a tall rectangular bottle (I'm not good with brand names), but once I couldn't find it and bought something else. The other brand was kind of thick and syrupy and the BBQ sauce ended up tasting bitter. So, stay away from syrupy ones. Otherwise this is an incredibly good recipe.

Bake the ribs no more than 2 hours and maybe 1-1/2 after lowering temp to 250F; much longer and they start falling apart (still taste great but rather hard to flip while broiling). Make sure you start the BBQ sauce immediately after lowering the oven temp. Use a small red onion, it's easy to overdo. If the sauce gets too thick, just thin with water.

Try to have several side dishes, otherwise you'll eat all of one rack and most of the other in one sitting.