Lamb Loin Chops with Moroccan Breadcrumbs

With its sultry scents, this dish becomes a weeknight trip to Morocco. We use a quick-cooking, tender and often overlooked cut of lamb, the loin chop. Think of them as little lamb porterhouse steaks, as luxurious and flavorful as their big beef equivalent. We broil to keep it easy, but you can sear them stove top or throw them on the grill. It's a tender cut, so don't overcook them. They're piled with a toasty, crunchy, panko breadcrumb topping mixed with the scents and flavors of Morocco like mint, cilantro, orange, pistachio and olive. Keep the recipe for the topping handy: You'll want to sprinkle it on chicken, pork, fish, even roasted vegetables. It's like a trip to Tangier on any Tuesday.

Ingredients

lamb
8 (each 4 to 5 ounces) lamb loin chops, trimmed
1 tablespoon olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

bread crumbs
1½ tablespoons unsalted butter
1 clove garlic, minced or finely grated garlic
1 teaspoon finely grated orange zest (about 1/2 an orange)
6 tablespoons panko breadcrumbs
1½ teaspoons finely chopped pitted oil-cured black olives
1 tablespoon roasted and salted shelled pistachios, coarsely chopped
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh cilantro
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh chives
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh mint
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions

for the lamb
Drizzle the chops all over with the oil and generously season with salt and pepper.

Preheat broiler. Arrange chops in a single layer on a foil-lined sheet pan. Broil the lamb 4 inches from the element until well-browned. Flip the chops after 4 to 5 minutes, then continue broiling until they reach desired doneness, 8 to 10 minutes for medium-rare. Divide chops among 4 plates.

(Alternatively a large, heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Add 1 tablespoon oil and swirl to coat the pan. Add chops to skillet and cook, turning halfway through, until both sides are nicely browned and to desired doneness, 6 to 8 minutes for medium-rare. Give the edges a quick sear as well. Divide chops among 4 plates.)

for the breadcrumbs
Melt the butter in a medium nonstick skillet over medium heat. Grate the garlic and zest into the butter and cook for 30 seconds. Add the panko, olives and pistachios and toast, stirring to coat evenly with the butter, until the crumbs are golden and crisp, 3 to 6 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in the cilantro, chives, mint and olives until combined. Season with 1/4 teaspoon salt and pepper to taste. Spoon about 2 tablespoons over each lamb chop and serve.

total time: 30 minutes
active prep: 30 minutes
serves: 4
difficulty: *easy*