

## A sumptuous pork roast for Thanksgiving

Massimo Capra, Saturday, Oct. 09, 2010



The first thing to do is ask your butcher for an eight-bone rack of pork with skin on (preferably local and/or organic) and a 10-by-10-inch piece of belly also with skin on. Do not get caught up with the branding of the beast too much – Berkshire, Kurobuta and black pig are the same delicious animal; regular pork is also okay. Then ask the butcher to French the rack (i.e. clean the bones and remove the chine bone) and to score the skin of both rack and belly with as many small, shallow incisions as he or she can make. This is called micro-scoring and it will allow the flavours to develop and the skin to crisp.

Once you're at home, I would recommend immersing the rack overnight in a brine of water, salt, sugar and fresh herbs. For the belly, a simple dry rub will work wonders.

### Roasted Harvest Pork

#### Brine

##### Ingredients

4 litres water

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup salt

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar

4 star anise

Bundle of rosemary, thyme and sage in equal amounts

4 bay leaves

1-inch piece ginger, sliced

1 tablespoon juniper

1 tablespoon black peppercorns

##### Method

Boil all the ingredients together for about 5 minutes and cool to room temperature without straining before use. (This is a light brine for a longer cure; it contains half of the usual amount of salt and sugar.)

### Pork belly

##### Ingredients

1 10-by-10-inch piece of pork belly, skin on with micro-incisions

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup of salt

1 tablespoon sugar

Bundle of rosemary, thyme and sage in equal amounts

2 cloves of garlic

3 cups of white onions, coarsely sliced

1 1-inch piece of ginger, sliced

4 star anise

## Method

Prepare a rubbing salt by blending the salt, sugar, rosemary, sage and thyme in a food processor.

Rub the mixture all over the belly on both sides and set belly aside for at least 2 hours.

Place the onions and the rest of the spices in a baking dish. Lay the pork belly flat in the mixture, skin side up.

Bake in a preheated oven at 325F for at least 2½ hours; the skin should be crackling and the meat as soft as butter. Remove from oven. Remove meat from pan and allow to rest in a warm place uncovered for at least 20 minutes.

Scrape the onions from the pan and degrease as much as possible, then purée the onions, taste for seasoning and set aside. Cut the belly into cubes and serve beside each chop (see below) with some onion purée.

## Rack

### Ingredients

1 8-bone pork rack (choose a small one if possible)	2 cups white wine
3 cups onions, celery and carrots, diced ½-inch thick and mixed	1 cup chicken stock
Bundle of rosemary, thyme and sage in equal amounts	2 tablespoons butter
5 cloves garlic	2 tablespoons vegetable oil
	Salt and pepper to taste

### Method

Submerge the rack in the brine overnight or at least 8 hours, then remove and dry as much as possible.

Preheat a baking pan and add the oil and butter. Once hot, add the vegetables and herbs. Simmer for a few minutes or until translucent, add the pork rack skin side up, add the white wine and place into a preheated oven at 350F for 1½ hours. To make the skin crisp, use the broiler feature of your oven or a butane torch with care. Check the progress every 15 minutes and, if the roast is a little too dry, add the chicken stock a bit at a time. Do not poke the meat unnecessarily or you will drain the juices. Cook it to an internal temperature of 155 to 160F, testing it with a meat thermometer. Once cooked, wrap with tin foil and rest for at least 30 minutes before cutting into it.

To create a tasty gravy, strain the roasting juices and purée the liquid with half the vegetables (remove the herbs sticks first). Blend with the onion purée (see above).

Place a bone in chop with a cube of belly alongside sautéed Brussels sprout leaves, balsamic glazed cipolline and roasted chestnut and squash. Serves 8.

*Chef Massimo Capra is co-owner of Mistura Restaurant and Sopra Upper Lounge in Toronto and guest chef on the TV show Restaurant Makeover.*