



Sugar Apple

Posts From The Caribbean

Pork Stuffed with Fennel

I came up with this grilled pork roast for our Italian Christmas party. It's part arrosto, part porchetta, part maiale alla griglia...and all good. We cooked our pork outside on the grill, because it's winter in the Caribbean and we could. If it's too cold where you are, this would be equally good roasted in the oven.

I used pork shoulder and boned it out myself, leaving the skin and the outside layer of fat to protect the meat from the heat of the barbecue. The fat melts, keeping the meat moist, and when you slice the pork, just leave the skin behind. This recipe would also work well with a boneless, butterflied pork loin.

1 pork roast, boned and butterflied (my roast was about 12 pounds before boning)

1 lemon

1 fennel bulb

1 small onion, peeled and diced

5-6 cloves of fresh garlic, peeled and minced

4 sprigs of fresh rosemary

a few pinches of dried red pepper flakes (optional)

1 teaspoon kosher salt

freshly ground black pepper

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

3 bay leaves

Cut the stalks and fronds off of the fennel bulb and reserve. Chop about 2 tablespoons of the wispy fronds to use in the stuffing. Trim the root end and any brown bits off the fennel and chop the bulb into small dice. Strip the leaves off the rosemary sprigs and chop the leaves.

Put the olive oil in a medium-sized sauté pan and heat over medium-low until warm. Add the chopped fennel and onion to the pan and sweat until the onion and fennel are softened but not browned, about 10 minutes. Add the garlic and optional red pepper flakes and cook for another minute. Stir in the rosemary, chopped fennel fronds, salt and pepper and remove the pan from the heat. Let the stuffing mixture cool to room temperature.

Lay the pork flat on a work surface, squeeze the lemon over it, and rub the juice into the meat. Season the roast with salt and pepper. Spread the fennel stuffing mixture evenly over the pork, pressing it into the meat. Roll the pork up like a jellyroll and tie it with kitchen twine to maintain its shape. Insert the bay leaves around the roast under the twine. (Note: You can prepare and stuff the pork the day before you serve it, storing it in plastic wrap in the refrigerator. Just make sure to take it out of the refrigerator about an hour before you want to cook it so it can come up to room temperature.)

Prepare a barbecue grill for indirect heat (i.e. with the coals on either side of the grill and a drip pan in the middle). Bones also added a few chunks of soaked apple wood and the fennel stalks to the charcoal. When the grill is heated to about 250° to 275°, grill the pork, turning occasionally, until the middle of the pork roasts reaches an internal temperature of 150°. This took about 3 to 3 1/2 hours on our grill. Remove the pork to a platter, tent with foil, and let it rest for 30 minutes. Remove the string and slice the pork for serving, leaving the skin behind if you've left it on for cooking.

A 10-12 pound boneless pork roast will easily feed about 18-20 people. I made two of these for our party and they fed 40 people with leftovers (which puts you well on your way to a killer Cuban sandwich).

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