

Brined Ham

2 ltr water
600g salt
6 juniper berries, lightly crushed
1 tsp white peppercorns
A couple of cloves
A couple of whole, dried chillies or 1tsp chilli flakes
A couple of bay leaves
A 4.5kg- 9kg half or whole leg of pork

For boiling:

A couple of bay leaves
A small glass of cider

Pour the water into a large pan and warm up. Tip in the salt and aromatics and stir until the salt has dissolved completely. Pour the brine into a large plastic container and cool then refrigerate until chilled.

Place the ham in the brine and weight it down to ensure it is completely submerged. Cover and leave in the coolest place you can find for 3 days minimum, 4 days maximum per kilo.

Take the ham out of the brine and soak in plenty of fresh, cold water for 24 hours. Drain and weigh the ham.

Place the ham in a pan with more fresh, cold water and bring to the boil. On boiling, empty the water and replace with more fresh, cold water, bay leaves and a glug of cider. Leave to simmer for about 20 minutes per 500g; allow the ham to cool in the cooking liquid.

Remove the ham from the water once cool and refrigerate.

Faggots

Ingredients:

- 250g fresh pig's liver
 - 250g fatty pork scraps
 - 1 fresh pig's heart, split in half and rinsed
 - 100g ham or bacon scraps
 - 100g fresh breadcrumbs
 - 1 onion, finely chopped
 - Salt
 - Freshly ground white pepper
 - ½ tsp Mace
 - 1 tsp cayenne pepper
 - 1 tsp all spice
 - a handful of chopped fresh parsley
 - a few sage leaves, finely chopped
 - small sprig of rosemary, finely chopped
 - small chopped red chilli (or dried chilli)
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- Caul fat or streaky bacon for wrapping (optional)

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas Mark 4.
2. Roughly chop then coarsely mince all the meats and combine in a bowl.
3. Add the breadcrumbs, onion, herbs, spices and some salt and pepper and mix together thoroughly
4. Shape mixture into six balls.
5. Wrap each in a square of caul fat. Cut it large enough to overlap - it will bind on itself to hold the faggots together.
6. If you're using streaky bacon, stretch each rasher with the back of a heavy knife, making them as long and as wide as possible (approximately two per faggot).
7. Flatten the balls slightly and place on a baking sheet or in an ovenproof dish into which they fit snugly and roast for 50 to 60 minutes, basting once or twice.

Pork Sausages

Sausage casing, 2–3 metres
Free-range or organic pork shoulder, 500g, minced
Free-range or organic pork belly, 250g, minced
Fine dried breadcrumbs, 25g (optional)
Salt (start with 1 heaped teaspoon)
Sage leaves, 16
Black pepper
White pepper if you have some
Nutmeg or mace, a good grinding or 1/4 teaspoon
A little oil for frying

2 large bowls, wooden spoon, sharp knife, chopping board, teaspoon, frying pan, a wide-necked funnel (hardware shops sell cheap ones), something to act as a plunger to push the meat down the neck of the funnel (the handle of a rolling pin, perhaps), clean string, scissors, an assistant (sausage making is much easier and far more fun when there are two of you)

1. Put one of the large bowls in the sink and fill it with cold water. Drop the length of casing into it. Find one of the ends and hold it close under the cold tap. Turn the tap on a little. You'll see the water run in and the skin will gradually swell as the water travels down, so it looks like a long, curly snake – an amazing sight! Keep running the water through the casing for a minute or two and then leave the casing to soak in the bowl of water while you make the sausage meat.
2. Put all the minced pork in the other large bowl. Add the breadcrumbs if you are using them (a small amount is good for the texture of the sausage), then add the salt and stir well with the wooden spoon.
3. Chop the sage leaves and add them to the mixture with some pepper and nutmeg or mace.
4. Before you start going into sausage production, make a little 'cake' of a couple of teaspoons of the sausage meat and fry it for a couple of minutes on each side until cooked through. Taste it for seasoning – do you need more herbs, more salt, more pepper?
5. Now to fill the sausages. Take the casing out of the water and slide your fingers down it to push out any water trapped inside. Find one end of the casing and draw it over the spout of the funnel. Gather up all the casing over the spout (rather like putting a legwarmer on over your foot), leaving a little bit of the casing overlapping the tip of the funnel.
6. Take a spoonful of the sausage meat and push it down through the neck of the funnel. When the meat appears in the tip of the casing, tie a piece of string around the bottom to pinch it closed (if you tie the casing closed before you put the meat in, you'll get a big bubble of trapped air).
7. Take it in turns with your assistant to keep pushing the sausage meat through the funnel and into the casing, which will slide off the spout of the funnel as it fills up with meat. Try not to make the sausages too thick and fat or they'll burst when you twist them into lengths. It's difficult to make them really even at first and you'll probably find that the end of your string of sausages is a bit more professional looking than the start.
8. When you've used up all the sausage meat, you'll need to twist the filled casing

into individual sausages – unless you're going to cook the sausage in one big coil like a Cumberland sausage. Starting at the tied-up end, gently pinch the casing and twirl the sausage clockwise every so often, so that you get a classic 'string of sausages', like something out of a cartoon. Then find the middle of the string (roughly) and start twisting 'opposite' sausages into pairs (see the picture). There is a clever butcher's way of twisting them into bunches of 3, but it's too hard to explain!

9. When you get to the end, tie it up with string and snip off any remaining casing. Hang up the sausages somewhere cool and airy for a few hours and then either cook them straight away or, better still but you'll need unbelievable patience, put them on the bottom shelf of the fridge overnight to let the flavour settle.

10. When you want to cook your sausages, heat a little oil in a frying pan over a low heat. Fry the sausages fairly gently, turning them every few minutes so that they brown all over without burning. They should cook gently for at least 15 minutes, depending on their thickness; cut one open to make sure they are cooked all the way through.

Rillons of Pork Belly

Rillons of pork belly

Ingredients:

- 500-750g pork belly, ideally from the thick end, ribs removed
- 3 -4 tbsp of pork fat (lard)
- 3 – 4 cloves of garlic
- 3 sprigs of fresh thyme
- Flaky sea salt
- 1 glass of water
- 1 glass of red wine

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/gas mark 6.
2. Cut the pork belly into strips and then into thick chunks. Heat some lightly seasoned lard in a heavy-bottomed frying pan, then add the pork, browning thoroughly on all sides so it's quite dark and wonderfully caramelised.
3. Transfer the pork to a roasting dish. Add crushed garlic cloves (in their skins), add the thyme and a good sprinkling of flaky sea salt. Pour the fat from the frying pan over the top and add the water and red wine to create a cooking liquid.
4. Bring to a gentle simmer on the hob before placing in the oven for 30 minutes, and turn them every 8 minutes or so. Lower the oven temperature to 150C/300F/Gas Mark 2 and cook for a further 1 ½ hours or so, until the flesh is very tender.
5. Serve hot, with creamy mashed potato and cabbage, or cold as a tasty lunch with bread and butter and dill pickled cucumbers.

Roast Stuffed Pork Belly

Roast, stuffed pork belly

Ingredients:

- 500-750g pork belly (de-boned and trimmed)
- 150g fresh breadcrumbs
- Handful of freshly chopped sage
- Freshly ground black (or white) pepper
- Worcester sauce

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 220C/425F/Gas Mark7.
2. Score the outer skin of the pork belly (for crackling) with a sharp knife.
3. Mix the breadcrumbs, sage, pepper and a little Worcester sauce together for the stuffing and spread the mixture on the inside of the belly
4. Roll up the belly and tie the securely with kitchen string. Place in a roasting tin.
5. Roast for 15-20 minutes, then reduce the oven to 170C/325F/Gas Mark3 and cook for a further 1 ½ hours.

Roast Belly of Pork with Apple Sauce

Serves about 8

Ingredients:

The thick end of the belly (last 6 ribs)
Fresh thyme leaves
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the apple sauce:

3–4 large Bramley apples
A squeeze of lemon juice
Grated zest (no pith) and juice of 1/2 orange
1–2 tablespoons caster sugar (to taste)

Method:

Score the skin of the belly with a sharp knife (a Stanley knife is surprisingly handy) and rub with salt, pepper and fresh thyme leaves, getting the seasoning and herbs right into the cracks. Roast in a hot oven (220°C/Gas Mark 7) for 30 minutes, then turn the oven down to 180°C/Gas Mark 4 and cook for roughly another hour, until the juices run clear when the meat is pierced with a skewer and the crackling has crackled to an irresistible golden brown. If the crackling is reluctant, whack up the heat again, as high as you like, and check every few minutes till it's done.

To make the sauce, peel, core and slice the Bramleys, tossing them with the lemon juice as you go. Put them in a pan with the orange zest and juice and a first sprinkling of sugar. Cook gently until the apples break up into a rough purée, then check for sweetness and adjust to your taste. Keep warm (or reheat gently to serve).

Remove the crackling from the pork before carving, then cut the joint into thick slices. Serve each person one or two slices with a good piece of crackling, and bring the apple sauce to the table. I like to serve this with mashed potatoes, not roast, as there's already plenty of fat and crispiness on the plate. Some simple, lightly steamed greens such as Savoy cabbage, spinach or curly kale, will help to ease your conscience as you lap up the lard.

Chinese Style Pigs' Trotters

Serves about 8.

Ingredients:

- 2-3 tbsp sunflower or ground nut oil
- 6 pig's trotters
- Knuckle of pork
- About 4 or 5 'thumbs' of fresh ginger
- 3 - 4 large cloves of garlic
- 400ml organic apple juice
- 75ml organic soy sauce
- 40ml organic cider vinegar
- 20g unrefined caster sugar
- 2 large, whole, fresh red chillies
- Freshly ground black pepper

To serve: Fine noodles and wilted greens; chard is particularly good with this dish

Method:

Heat the oil over a medium-high heat in a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan. Brown the trotters and knuckle of pork, turning to ensure they are evenly browned all over. Don't overcrowd the pan, as you'll steam the meat instead of browning it – you may need to brown the meat in batches.

2. Break off one 'thumb' of ginger; peel it and slice it thinly. Peel the rest and grate it. Peel the garlic and crush 2-3 of the cloves; finely slice the remaining one.

3. Add the ginger and garlic to the meat and stir everything together. Next, add the apple juice, soy sauce, cider vinegar, sugar and enough water just to cover.

4. Finally, add the whole red chillies and a few grinds of black pepper, bring to the boil and then lower the heat and cook on a low simmer for 1-1.5 hrs. The trotters should be really tender and the sweet-and-sour sauce nicely reduced. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary. Serve with fine noodles and wilted greens.