

Easy-to-prepare meals and accompanying drinks

Pork Belly, Mustard Mash & Greens

BY RACHEL WALKER



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THIS IS A FAVOURITE DINNER-PARTY RECIPE. The individual, gastropub-style squares of pork belly look so impressive, but they couldn't be easier to cook.

Serves 8

- 2–2.5kg pork belly, boned, skin intact and finely scored
- 4 carrots, rough dice
- 2 onions, rough dice
- 1 fennel bulb, rough dice
- 2 bay leaves
- 1tbsp peppercorns
- 45g butter
- 45g flour
- Lemon
- Vegetable or chicken stock, to cover (2 litres, depending on size of roasting tin)
- 1.5kg (King Edward, Maris Piper, Desiree), peeled and rough dice
- 75g butter
- 100ml milk or cream
- 4tbsps grainy mustard
- Spring greens

1. Preheat the oven to 150C. Place the pork belly, skin-side up, in a roasting tin and scatter the carrots, onion, fennel, bay leaves and peppercorns round the edge.
2. Bring home-made stock up to a simmer. If you're using shop-bought stock cubes, then make it weaker than pack instructions—it will be too salty otherwise, and there are plenty of vegetables to boost the flavour during cooking.
3. Pour the stock over the pork belly so it's covered, roast



at 150C for three hours. Remove and set to one side, leaving the belly and stock to cool in the pan for 45 minutes.

4. Lift the pork belly out of the roasting pan and place it, skin-side down, on a tray. Put a chopping board on top of it with something heavy on top (e.g. kitchen weights, tins of tomatoes) to press the belly. Refrigerate for anywhere from 2 hours to overnight. Meanwhile, strain the stock and also refrigerate until it's needed.

5. Preheat the oven to 200C.

6. Put on the potatoes to boil. Once they're cooked, drain and mash with the butter, milk or cream and mustard.

7. To finish the pork belly, put it skin-side down on a board and cut it into eight squares. Rub a pinch of salt into the skin and cook the

squares, skin-side down, for 20–25 minutes until the fat is melting and the skin is crisp and golden.

8. To make a gravy, heat the butter in a pan, add the flour and cook for 1 minute on a low heat until it's a deep-straw colour. Add a ladle at a time of the strained juices that the pork was cooked in, stirring constantly until you have a smooth consistency. Taste and then season with a squeeze of lemon, salt and pepper. Tip into a warmed gravy jug.

9. Blanch the spring greens in boiling water, toss with the butter and pinch of salt, and tip into a warmed dish.

10. Plate up each portion by putting a scoop of mustard mash in the middle of a warmed plate and place a pork-belly square on top. Put the gravy and spring greens on the table so everyone can serve themselves.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIM & ZOE HILL

Rhubarb Syllabub

A few scoops of this is the perfect end to a pork roast. For a dinner party, spoon the chilled syllabub into a brandy-snap basket just before serving, or crumble some amaretti biscuits on top as a delicious garnish.

- 450g rhubarb, sliced at 2 inches, on the diagonal
- 1 thumb-sized knob of ginger, peeled and grated
- 75g caster sugar
- 75ml white wine
- 300ml double cream
- 100ml Greek yogurt
- Optional: brandy-snap basket; tuile; amaretti biscuits, crumbled

1. Put the rhubarb, ginger, caster sugar and white wine in a saucepan. Allow it to reach a gentle simmer and cook for 4–5 minutes, until the rhubarb is tender but still holding its shape.



2. Drain the rhubarb and reserve the juice. Set aside to cool.
3. Meanwhile, whip the cream and stir in the Greek yogurt. Fold in the rhubarb and 2tbsps of the reserved juice. Chill.
4. Divide between 4 bowls or glasses and drizzle the remaining juice on top, or spoon into brandy-snap baskets or martini glasses.

'TIS THE SEASON

This month marks the beginning of the field-grown rhubarb season. When buying, look for crisp stems that release sap when snapped and keep your eye out for “Valentine”—a particularly versatile variety with a beautiful, ruby-red colour and a sweet flavour. Simply stew for 20–30 minutes with apple juice and pile on top of yogurt for a light breakfast.

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Pair With Pork

ON A RECENT PRESS TRIP, I found myself in the back of a taxi sandwiched between two masters of wine. They were becoming more and more heated on the topic of wine pairing. One of them argued that it was unnecessary: “People should be free to drink whatever they want to drink”

I’m reluctant ever to enforce wine rules, so would normally side with him. But the master of wine the other side of me put forward a compelling argument. “What sauce do people serve with pork belly?” he asked.

“Apple sauce,” we said in unison.

“And why is that?” he asked.

Of course, pork belly is fatty and sweet, and a sauce made from stewed Bramley apples has a sharpness that cuts through the rich meat. “That’s all wine pairing is,” he explained, going on to express frustration at the wonderful home cooks who are intuitive in the kitchen but panic in the wine aisle, going for whatever was on a deal.

Spotting specific words on bottle labels is a great place to start. When it comes to rich pork belly, look for something with “acidity”, “freshness” or even “green apple” notes. The three below are favourites.



RACHEL RECOMMENDS...

■ **Waitrose White Burgundy**, (13%), Waitrose, £8.99

■ **Sainsburys Rioja Blanco**, Pinot Noir (12.5%), Aldi, £4.39

■ **Vignobles Roussellet**, Pinot Noir (12.5%), Aldi, £4.39

BOOK



Food Thesaurus (Bloomsbury Publishing, £17.09). A modern-day classic for those interested in flavour pairings.

BUDGET



Askeys Brandy-Snap Baskets, Tesco, £1.74.

An easy way to give a professional edge to pud.

BLOW OUT



Odysea Wild Thyme & Fragrant Herb Honey, odysea.com, £6.49/480g. A delicious Greek treat.