



Photos by Craig Lee / Special to The Chronicle; styling by Lynne Char Bennett 2009

Braised Pork Shoulder, Master Recipe

Serves 4-6, with leftovers; or 10-12 without leftovers

Bone-in pork shoulder roast contains the shoulder blade. This relatively thin bone — which usually weighs no more than 6 to 8 ounces in a whole shoulder — adds flavor and gelatin to the braising liquid. The bone is easily removed after the pork is cooked.

Whole bone-in pork butt, about 8-9 pounds

Kosher salt and pepper

1 piece thick smoked bacon

1 large carrot, cut into 1-inch pieces

1 celery rib, cut into 1-inch pieces

1 large yellow onion, cut into 1-inch pieces

2 large cloves garlic, peeled and smashed

1/4 cup Marsala wine

1 1/2 cups unsalted or low-sodium chicken broth + more as needed

1 1/2 cups Pinot Noir + more as needed

1 small sprig thyme

1 large bay leaf

Instructions: Trim pork of excess fat. In a small ramekin, mix salt and pepper in a two-to-one ratio. Start with 1 tablespoon salt and 1 1/2 teaspoons pepper; sprinkle over all surfaces of the meat. Lightly cover with plastic wrap and leave at room temperature for an hour.

Preheat the oven to 325°.

Place a heavy Dutch oven just large enough to hold the roast over medium heat. Add the bacon and cook until fat is rendered and bacon is crisp. Remove the bacon, and eat as a snack or save for another use; leave the fat in the pan.

Carefully place the roast, fat side down, into the hot pan. Brown the meat until it releases from the bottom of the pan on its own without much effort; brown on all sides, about 3 minutes per side. Remove the roast and set aside.

Remove any blackened bits of meat from the pan. Add the carrot,

celery, onion and garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, incorporating any browned bits (called fond) from the bottom of the pan. When vegetables are soft and beginning to caramelize, about 5-7 minutes, add the Marsala. Bring to a boil and cook, scraping the pan, until evaporated.

Return the roast to the pan. Add the broth, Pinot Noir, thyme and bay leaf. The liquid level should reach at least halfway up the roast; if it doesn't, add equal amounts of stock and wine.

Bring to a simmer, then remove from the heat. Crimp a piece of foil over the roast, but do not let the foil touch the roast (cover roast with parchment if foil touches it). Cover the Dutch oven with the lid and place in the oven. Cook 1 1/2 hours.

Remove lid, turn roast over, recover and cook an additional 1 1/2 to 2 hours, or until a knife easily pierces the meat and the internal tempera-

ture on an instant read thermometer is around 165°.

Move roast to a large cutting board. Strain sauce, reserving vegetables if desired (see Note), skim the fat then place sauce back into the still-warm pan. Flip roast over and return to the Dutch oven; lightly cover pan with parchment or foil and let the roast rest in the sauce for another 45-60 minutes. Taste sauce, reduce as desired and adjust seasoning.

Slice pork and serve with some of the sauce or continue with one of the additional recipes. Alternately cool both roast and sauce, then refrigerate separately to use later.

Note: Remove and discard thyme and bay leaf from the vegetables. Puree vegetables, adding a little water as needed; reserve to thicken and sweeten sauce as desired or reserve for another use.